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A VAGABOND HEROINE
By
THE AUTHOR OF
"OUGHT WE TO
VISIT HER?"

KD 2586

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A VAGABOND HEROINE.

A VAGABOND HEROINE.

BY



MRS. ANNIE EDWARDS,

AUTHOR OF "ARCHIE LOVELL," "OUGHT WE TO VISIT HER," "STEVEN
LAWRENCE, YEOMAN," "ORDEAL FOR WIVES," "PHILIP KARNS-
CLIFFE," ETC., ETC.

"She is too low for a high praise, too brown
for a fair praise, and too little for a great praise; only this commendation I
can afford her, that were she other than she is, she were unhandsome."

—MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

NEW YORK:
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1873.

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CHAPTER I.

THE WINE IN THE GRAPE-FLOWER.



PAIN or Clapham ?

A brand-new Clapham villa, all dust, dulness, and decorum, with "Mr. Augustus Jones" upon the brand-new door-plate. A drawing-room, like one's life, oppressively stiff and uninteresting, dining-room to match, husband to match, everything to match ! Fine Brussels carpets beneath one's feet ; a sun possessing the warmth and cheerfulness of a farthing rush-light overhead. Servants to wait upon one and consume one's means ; a brougham perhaps bearing the Jones coat-of-arms and liveries ; indisputable respectability, indisputable appearance—value, how much of solid good to one's self ?—well maintained. Amusement, pleasure, play, the quick-coursing blood, the jollity, the "go" of existence, nowhere.

So much for Clapham.

And Spain ? Spain, just across the Pyrenees there—Spain, from whence the warm wind blows on Belinda's face at this moment—what of that alter-

native? An uninteresting husband to start with, so much in common have futurity's chances both: but not a stiff, not a dull one. A genial little human creature in the main is Maria José de Seballos, wine merchant and commission agent of Seville, unburdened 'tis true by superfluity of intellect, but light of step in waltz and *cachuca*, and singing tenor love songs passably; his swarthy fingers too beringed, his swarthy locks too bergamoted for the very finest taste, his diet overtending somewhat toward garlic; and still, if but by virtue of his Spanish picturesqueness, less vulgar far than Mr. Augustus Jones of Clapham. What would life be by his side?

In the first place, thinks Belinda sagely, life, did one marry the little Sevillian, need not of necessity be passed at his side at all. Maria José would naturally have to look after his agency business, travel to distant countries for wine orders, take his pleasure, as Spanish gentlemen do, in club or *café*, leaving his wife free. Free—in a flat in a Seville street; no appearance to keep up; no respectability; a tiled floor instead of Brussels carpet beneath one's feet; not a hope of brougham or liveries this side heaven—but free! The good, warmth-giving sun of Spain overhead; a hundred sweet distractions of dance and *tertulia* to count the days by; bull-fights, theatres, and music for one's Sundays: enjoyment, in short, the rule, not the exception of life, and with only Maria José, who after all stands comparison with Mr. Augustus Jones right well, for drawback.

Belinda crosses her arms, shakes her head philo-

sophically, yawns a little, then casts herself full length on the turf, in one of those attitudes of delicious southern laziness which Murillo's beggar children have made familiar to us, and, gazing up through the branches of the cork trees at the intense small-blue of the sky above, begins to meditate.

Sunburnt as a maize-field in June, unshackled bodily and mentally by rule as any young gitana who roams the mountains yonder, through what contradictory whim of fortune came Belinda O'Shea by this high-sounding name of hers? A name reminding one irresistibly of the musk and millefleurs of boudoirs, of Mr. Pope's verses, china teacups, rouge, pearl powder, artifice! She will be seventeen in a month or two, but possesses few of the theoretic charms assigned by poets and novel-writers to that age. Her hands and feet are disproportionately large for her slender limbs, her waist is straight but formless, her gait and gestures are masculine—no, not that either, to eyes that can read aright the girl is as full of potential womanly grace as is the grape-flower of wine; and still I dare not call her "feminine," as people of the north or of cities understand the word. She can play paume, the national Basque fives or rackets, with any gamin of her stature in St. Jean de Luz; in the excitement of the sport will show hot blood like her comrades—occasionally, indeed, say at some disputed point of a set match, will be tempted into using a very mild gamin's expletive or two; she can row, she can swim, she can whistle. But through her great dark eyes, poor

forsaken Belinda, the softest girlish soul still looks out at you with pathetic incongruity, and though her vocabulary be not choice, she possesses Heaven's great gift to her sex, a distinctly, excellently feminine voice. Of her possible beauty at some future time we will not now speak. She is in the chrysalis or hobbledehoy stage, when you may any day see a skinny, sallow, ugly duckling of a girl turn into a pretty one, like a transformation in a Christmas piece. Eyes, mouth, feet, hands—all look too big for Belinda at present; and as to her raiment, her tattered frock, her undarned—no, I must really enter a little upon the antecedents of my heroine's life before I make known these details in all the disgraceful nakedness of fact to the public.

To begin with, the blood of earls and kings (Hibernian kings) runs in her veins. Her mother, the Lady Elizabeth Vansittart, fifth daughter of the Earl of Liskeard, at the romantic age of forty-one fell in love with and married a certain fascinating Irish spendthrift, Major Cornelius O'Shea, whom she met accidentally at a Scarborough ball; endured the neglect, and worse than neglect, of her handsome husband, for the space of two years; then, happily for herself, poor soul, died, leaving Cornelius the father of one baby daughter, the Belinda of this little history.

Why Major O'Shea, an easy-tempered, easy-principled soldier of fortune, no longer himself in the freshest bloom of youth—why O'Shea in the first instance should have been at the pains to woo

his elderly Lady Elizabeth no one could tell, except that she *was* Lady Elizabeth, and that interest, that *ignis fatuus* of ruined men, might be supposed to lie dormant in the Earl her father's family. Whatever his motives, whatever his matrimonial disappointments, the Major, even his best friends allowed, behaved himself creditably on his wife's death. Wore a band that all but covered his hat, swore never again to touch a card or dice-box (nor broke his oath for three weeks); and wrote a letter full not only of pious, but of well-worded sentiments to his father-in-law—from whom, despite many touching allusions to the infant pledge left behind by their sainted Elizabeth, he received, I must say, but a curt and pompous dozen lines in reply. Then, his duties as a widower discharged, Cornelius cast about him to see how he should best perform those of a father. The sum of three thousand pounds, Lady Elizabeth's slender fortune, was settled inalienably on the child. “Me little one is not a pauper entirely,” O’Shea would say, with tears in his good-looking Irish eyes. “If Providence in its wisdom should be pleased to sign my recall to-morrow, me angel Belinda would have her mother’s fortune to stand between her and starvation.” And so till she had reached the age of seven “me angel Belinda” was indifferently boarded, at the rate of about forty pounds a year, and no holidays, in a Cork convent. Then O’Shea brought his face and lineage once more to the marriage market, on this occasion winning no faded scion of nobility, but the still bloom-

ing widow of a well-to-do London lawyer, and Belinda, for the first time since her birth, had to learn the meaning—bitterer than sweet, poor little mortal, in her case—of the word home.

No young child, it may be safely asserted, was ever unhappy in a community of cloistered nuns. Screen a flower as persistently as you will from the wholesome kisses of sun and light, and if some straggling breath of heaven chance to reach it, not a poor, distorted, colorless petal but will assert nature in spite of you. Bring women's hearts to a state of moral anaemia by all the appliances priestly science can command, then let little children come near them, and from each pale vestal will blossom forth the instincts of maternity still! If Belinda had never known the exclusive passion of a mother's love, she had known what at seven years of age is probably to the full as welcome—petting and attention without limits. Before she had been a week under the roof of her father and his new wife, the cold iron of neglect, sharper to a child's sensitive nature than any alternation of harshness and affection, had entered her soul.

The second Mrs. O'Shea was a woman whom all the ladies of her acquaintance called "sweet"—you know the kind of human creature she must be! A blonde skin, the least in the world inclined to freckle, blonde hair, blonde eyelashes, eyes of a dove, voice of a dying zephyr. A sweet little woman, a dear little woman, an admirably well-dressed, and, what is more, a *well-conducted* little woman, but—not fond

of children. Nothing could more beautifully befit her character and the occasion than her conduct toward her small stepdaughter. "I should never forgive myself if the poor darling grew up without regarding me as a mother," said Mrs. O'Shea, not wholly forgetful perhaps that the poor darling could call the Earl of Liskeard grandpapa. "And, though the Major is so sadly indifferent on the *most vital* of all subjects, I feel it my duty to bring her at once under Protestant influences." But the Protestant influences established—a grim London nurse in a London back-nursery; the discovery made, too, that obdurate aristocratic connections were in no way to be softened through the child's agency—and Belinda, on the score of love, could scarce have fared worse had she been one of the gutter children whom she watched and envied, through the prison-bars of her window, down in the court below.

Had she been ornamental, the bolls of life might have broken differently for her; a rose-and-white flaxen-curled puppet sitting beside another rose-and-white flaxen-chignonned puppet in a brougham, being scarcely less attractive, though on the whole more troublesome, than a good breed of pug. But she was very far indeed from ornamental: a skinny, dark-complexioned child, with over-big eyes looking wistfully from an over-small face, and hair cropped close to the head, *coupé à rasoir*, according to French fashion often adopted for the younger children in some Irish convents. And so, all fortuitous accidents working together and against her, Belinda was left

to starve! Her small body nourished on the accustomed roast mutton and rice pudding of the English nursery, and her soul—eager, fervent, hungry little soul that it was—left to starve!

She tried, impelled by the potent necessity of loving there was in her, to love her nurses. But Mrs. O'Shea's was a household in which, notwithstanding the sweetness of the mistress, the women servants shifted as perpetually as the characters in a pantomime. If Belinda loved a Sarah one month, she must force love a Mary the next, and then a new Sarah, and then a Hannah. She tried, casting longing eyes at them from her iron-bound prison-windows, to love the neighboring gutter children—happy gutter children, free to make the most of such grimy fractions of earth and sky as fate had yielded them! She tried—no; effort was not needed here; with all the might of her ardent, keenly-strung nature, Belinda, throughout those early years of isolation and neglect, loved her father.

Little enough she saw of him. O'Shea had come into a fortune of some thirty or forty thousand pounds by his second marriage, and was spending it like a man. (Like a monster! Mrs. O'Shea would declare piteously, when the inevitable day of reckoning had overtaken them. Would she ever have consented to a brougham and men servants and Sunday dinners—Sunday dinners! with her principles!—if she had known that Major O'Shea was a pauper, not worth the coat he was married in!) Occasionally, twice in three months, perhaps, the fancy would

strike Cornelius to lounge, his pipe in his mouth, into the child's nursery for a game of romps. Occasionally, after entertaining some extra fine friends at dinner, perhaps he would bid the servants bring Miss O'Shea down to dessert, chiefly it would seem—but Belinda was happily indiscriminative—for the opportunity her presence afforded of airing his connection with the Earl of Liskeard's family. On a few blissful Sundays throughout the year, would take her out for a walk through the parks.

This was all—the sole approach to parental love that brightened Belinda's lonely child's life; and as years went on even this scant intercourse between O'Shea and his daughter lessened. Difficulties multiplied round the man; truths of many kinds dawned upon the poor pink-and-white fool whose substance he had wasted. Recriminations, long absences, cruel retrenchments of expenditure, falling off of fair-weather friends, all followed in natural sequence. And then came the crash in earnest: Belinda's pitance their only certain support for the future! The house in May Fair must be exchanged for one in Bayswater: the house in Bayswater must give place to lodgings; the lodgings from "elegance," so called, must sink to respectability; respectability to eighteen shillings a week, no extras, and dirt and discomfort unlimited. Belinda, instead of roast mutton and rice pudding, must eat whatever cold scraps chanced to be over from yesterday's meal, and no pudding at all; instead of yawning over French verbs, or thrumming scales on the piano, must run

errands, mend clothes, crimp chignons, plait false tresses, and generally make herself the milliner, lady's maid, and drudge of her stepmamma, Rose.

Barring the hair-dressing duties, which, seeing the straits to which they were reduced, goaded her to desperation, I should say the change of fortune affected the girl's spirits but lightly. Children of a certain age rather like catastrophes that cut them, adrift from all old landmarks, so long at least as the catastrophes wear the gloss of newness. Belinda, by temperament, craved for change, movement, action of any kind, and of these she had far more in Bohemia than Belgravia. She had also more of her father! Not a very desirable acquisition, one would say, viewing matters with the eyes of reason; but Belinda, you see, viewed them with the eyes of love—enormous difference.

Cornelius descended the ladder of life with a philosophic, gentlemanly grace, that added the last drop of bitterness to Mrs. O'Shea's cup. It was not his first experience of the kind, it must be remembered; and so long as abundant alcoholic resource fail not, 'tis curious with what ease men of his stamp get used to these little social vicissitudes. O'Shea had worn a threadbare coat, had frequented a tavern instead of a club, had drunk gin and water instead of claret and champagne, before this, and fell back into the old, well-greased groove of insolvency almost with a sense of relief.

Belinda, who could see no evil in what she loved, thought papa's resignation sublime!

His dress from shabbiness degenerated to something worse, his nose grew redder, his hours and his gait alike more uncertain. In Belinda's eyes he was still the best and dearest of fathers, the most incomparably long-suffering of husbands. "Rose must have her chignons crimped, must put on her pearl powder and her silk dresses, just as if we were rich 'ill," the girl would think with the blind injustice of her age, "while papa, poor papa, wears his oldest clothes and broken boots; yes, and will sing a song at times to his little girl, and be gay and light-hearted through it all." And the wisdom of the whole world would not have convinced her that there could be courage, of a kind, in Rose's crimped chignon and silk dresses, and cowardice—that worst cowardice which springs from apathetic despair—in her father's greasy coat and broken boots and gin-and-water joviality!

The truth was this: Cornelius knew that his last trick was made, Rose that she had the possibility of one still in her hand—a certain Uncle Robert, crusty, vulgar, rich, "living retired" in his own villa at Brompton. Very different would Belinda's story have turned out had this uncle chanced to be an aunt. The old lady never lived who could resist the blandishments of Cornelius O'Shea when he willed to fascinate. Upon the coarse, tough heart, the hardened, unbelieving ears of Uncle Robert, the Irishman's sentiments, repentance, touching allusions even to honor and high lineage, were alike wasted. Rosie had chosen to throw herself away upon a scoun-

drel. Don't talk to him about birth; Uncle Robert called a man a gentleman who acted as a gentleman. Rosie, poor fool, had made her bed and must lie upon it—for Uncle Robert's language was no less coarse than his intelligence. Still, let her come to want, let the scoundrel of a husband decamp, take his worthless presence to any other country he chose, and keep there, and the door of Uncle Robert's house would never be closed against his sister's child. And as the old man had not another near relation upon the face of the earth, Mrs. Rose knew pretty well that, O'Shea's disappearance once compassed, not only would the door of Uncle Robert's house, but a fair chance of a place in Uncle Robert's will, stand open to her.

A last card, I repeat, was yet to be played by Mrs. O'Shea. She played it well—with that instinctive knowledge of male human nature that you will find in the very shallowest feminine souls. Uncle Robert was a democrat to the backbone; tittle-tattle from the bloated upper ten must consequently be tasteful to him, were it but as proof of his own radical theories; and Rose would prattle to him by the hour together about her ladyship's card debts, and his grace's peccadilloes, and her poor dear O'Shea's intimate connection with the aristocracy. Uncle Robert was as proud of his purse as any self-made man in England. Nothing swelled him with the righteous sense of solvency like the sight of another's pauperism; still, for *his* niece to have appeared discreditably dressed before the servants, a poor rela-

tion in all the galling indecency of a merino gown or mended gloves, would have exasperated the old man beyond measure. So Rose took excellent care to do her pauperism genteelly. In the most becoming little bonnet, the most scrupulously neat silk dress—"the last of all my pretty things, Uncle Robert. Oh, if you knew—can we poor women help being foolish?—if you knew how dreadful it is to one to give up the refinements of life!"—in the most becoming attire, I say, that woman could wear, this simple creature would pay her humble, tearful conciliatory visits to the Brompton villa, and seldom return without a crisp piece of paper, never entirely empty-handed, to the bosom of her family.

At last, one fine spring morning, came an overture of direct reconciliation, couched in the plainest possible language, from Uncle Robert's own lips. Let Major O'Shea betake himself to America, one of the colonies, anywhere out of England that he chose, solemnly swearing to keep away during the space of two years at least, and Uncle Robert promised not only to receive back his niece to preside over his house and sit at the head of his table, but to pay O'Shea the sum of three hundred pounds before his departure. Enough, surely, to last, if the man had a man's heart within his breast, until such time as he could gain a decent independence for himself by work.

Cornelius was absent from home, that is to say, from their dingy lodgings, for the time being, when this occurred: had been absent more than a fortnight,

Heaven knows on what mission—I believe he called it the Doncaster Spring Meeting to his wife and daughter. He returned late that same evening, rather more hiccoughing of speech than usual, and with just sixpence short for the payment of his cab-hire in his pocket.

Rosie broke the news of her uncle's proffered generosity as O'Shea sat drinking his hot gin-and-water after supper, Belinda mending a very torn stocking with very long stitches at his side.

"Of course it is impossible," sighed Mrs. O'Shea, with tears in her meek eyes. "I feel it a duty to mention the proposal, if only to show the Christian spirit of *my* relations; but of course such a separation would be impossible."

"Impossible, Rose!" cried O'Shea, his sodden face brightening. Of so fine and discursive a nature was the creature's hopefulness, that the bare mention of three hundred pounds and of being rid of his domesticities sufficed to inspire him with the visions of a millionaire. "Who talks of impossible? Am I the man, d'ye think—is Cornelius O'Shea the man to let his own paltry feelings stand between his family and prosperity?"

And in less time than it has taken me to write, husband and wife had made up their minds heroically to the sacrifice. The details were not difficult to agree upon. Cornelius would seek his fortune in America, "the best country on earth for a man of resolution and ability." Poor, semi-widowed Rose took refuge at Brompton. Belinda, with the hundred

and twenty pounds a year derived from her mother's fortune, might be considered independent. She should be sent to some moderately expensive boarding-school for the next two years, the term of her father's banishment, and Uncle Robert had considerately said that she might look upon his house as her home during the midsummer and Christmas holidays.

Belinda independent, Cornelius put upon his legs and offered his freedom, and Rose restored to a pew in church, fine clothes, and livery servants. What a touch of the magician's wand was this!

Next day was Sunday. Major O'Shea dyed his whiskers, which he had suffered to grow grey under the cold shade of poverty, brushed up his coat, put on a pair of lavender gloves, and lounged away the afternoon in the park, his hat as rakishly set on his head, his whole air as jaunty as in the palmiest days of his youth. Madame, after duly attending morning service—for was it not her first duty, said Rosie, her eyes swimming, to offer thanksgiving for her own and her dear O'Shea's good fortune?—madame, after attending morning service, betook herself to Brompton, and employed the remainder of the day in talking over events and planning a thousand agreeable domestic comforts for herself with Uncle Robert. Belinda, poor little fool, cried herself white and sick with passionate grief. She did not want respectability, or boarding-schools, or a home in the holidays. She wanted all she loved on earth, her worthless old father, and was to lose him.

"We really have very different ways of showing our affection," said Mrs. O'Shea when she returned well dressed, blooming, full of hope in the future, and found the child crouched down, dinnerless, dirty, her face disfigured and swollen with tears, beside a fireless hearth. "I suppose I shall suffer more than any one else by your papa's absence, but I do *what is right*. I do not embitter the thorny path of duty still more to his feet"—Rosie had always a fine florid style of metaphor of her own when she tried to talk grand—"by useless tears and lamentations."

From that night on until the hour of final separation, scarcely more than a week, Belinda kept her feelings better under control. She worked a little purse in secret, upon which you may be sure many a salt tear fell, put in it all her slender hoard of pocket money, and pushed it into her father's not unwilling hand on the day of his departure—instinct telling her what kind of gift would to Cornelius be the welcomest token of filial love. When the supreme moment of parting had arrived she clung to him, shivering, tearless, dumb; while Rosie, whose only feeling was one of cheerful relief, cried almost to the verge of unbecomingness, and uttered every imaginable wifely platitude about the heart-rending cruelty of the situation, and the dreadful, dreadful pain that her devotion to duty and to her husband's interests was costing her.

Then came the removal to Brompton; fine rosewood and mahogany, excellent dinners, city friends,

Uncle Robert's vulgar, purse-proud talk—all, it would seem, very tasteful to Mrs. O'Shea. And then, less than a twelvemonth after Belinda felt the last kiss of her father's lips, came a New York paper, directed in a strange hand, to Uncle Robert, and containing the bald announcement of Cornelius O'Shea's death. The poor little girl, away at a second-class Brighton boarding-school, was summoned home in haste; the blinds of the Brompton villa were drawn decently close for four days, and partially lowered on the fifth, or imaginary funeral day; Rosie, for the second time in her life, veiled her sorrow under the most bewitching weeds. Uncle Robert talked about the mysterious ways of Providence, kept the corners of his mouth well down before the servants, and ere a week was over had made a new will leaving every shilling he possessed at the unconditional disposal of his dear niece Rose.

O'Shea, in short, in dying had committed by far the best action of his half-century of life, and everybody in the house knew it. Everybody but Belinda! Nature has compensation for us all—gives a neglected little daughter to love, to mourn, even a Cornelius O'Shea. Fiercer than ever grew Belinda's rebellion now against Uncle Robert's smart furniture, dinners, butler, all of them bought, she would say, her dark eyes flashing fire through her tears, bought with papa's life. If they had not driven papa away from England he had not died, nor she been desolate! Let them send her away—anywhere on the face of the earth that was *not* Brompton. Yes, she

would go to school abroad—to Bologne, Berlin, as they chose. Only—pathetic stipulation for her age—let her remain away until she was old enough to see after herself in life, unaided, and let her have no holidays. And a charmingly opportune chance of gratifying the girl's perverse fancies was not long in presenting itself. Sedulously reading through the educational column of the "Times," Rose one morning, with a lighting of the stepmaternal bosom, came upon the following :

RARE OPPORTUNITY FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS.

A lady of literary attainments, socially unencumbered, and entertaining advanced ideas as to the higher culture and destinies of her sex, offers her society and influence to any young girl of good birth, for whom improvement by continental travel may be desired. Terms moderate, and paid invariably in advance. References exchanged.

By the next post, Mrs. O'Shea and the lady holding advanced ideas were in communication. They interviewed each other; they exchanged opinions on the destiny of the sex; they exchanged references. After some battling, the commercial part of the transaction was brought to a satisfactory close, and Bellinda, sullenly submissive to anything that divided her from Rose, Brompton, and Uncle Robert, made her next great step in life.

The name of her new preceptress (of whom more hereafter) was Burke, Miss Lydia Burke—a name not unknown to fame either in the speech-making or book-making world. And under, or oftener without

this lady's care, Belinda's "culture" has been progressing up to the present time ; no material change occurring meanwhile at Brompton save Uncle Robert's death, which took place about three months before the date at which this little history opens. Some smattering of languages the girl, drifting hither and thither over Europe, has picked up ; some music and dancing, of a vagrant kind ; a good deal of premature acquaintance with human nature : life, opened, I fear, at somewhat tattered pages, for her class-book ; neglect, not invariably the worst educator, for her master.

A socially unencumbered lady, bent on correcting the mistakes made by her sex during the past six thousand years, and with the higher destinies of the future on her soul, could scarcely have time to waste on the training of the one unimportant unit immediately beneath her eyes. In few minds are broadness of vision and capacity for small detail coëxistent. The mind of Miss Lydia Burke was of the visionary or far-embracing order—an order quite beyond the wretched details of lawn dresses and darning needles. Newton forgot his dinner hour ; could a Miss Lydia Burke be expected to notice the holes—

But this brings me back exactly to the point at which a certain pride in my poor little heroine forced me into retrospection—the holes in Belinda's stockings.



CHAPTER II.

AMBROSIAL CASH.

JT is but too obvious that they are a haphazard, unlawful pair. Belinda darns not, neither does she sew. Her clothes go uncounted to the washerwoman, and return or do not return as they list ; by natural processes of selection, such as are of tougher fibre than their fellows survive and come together in the end, irrespective of any primitive differences in color or design. Of these stockings that she now wears, one being grey, the other brown, both ragged, it would indeed be hard to conjecture the original stock ; nor is their incongruous effect lessened by a well-worn pair of the sandals of the country, *espargottes*, in Basque parlance, linen slippers, roughly embroidered in scarlet, and bound high above the instep by worsted sandals. Her frock is of rusty black, texture indescribable ; her hat of unbleached coarse straw, so battered out of shape that one must see it on a human head to recognize it as a hat at all. And she wears her hair in plaits, tight, hideous plaits, tied together at the

ends, according to the fashion of the Spanish peasants, by a piece of frayed-out, once green ribbon.

Nothing lovely, nothing artistic even, about her. Yet 'tis a picture that a stranger of discriminative eye could scarce pass unnoticed—this poor little girl with her tattered frock and illicit stockings, and sun-burnt, high-bred face, audaciously gay one minute as any Paris gamin's, sad the next as that of a woman who already has tasted the fruit of knowledge and found it bitter!

Spain or Clapham? Raising herself lazily from the sward—such mixture of dust and lifeless stalk as here in the south we dignify by the name of sward—Belinda, after several more yawns, draws forth from her ragged pocket a letter, written on sea-green English note-paper, that must certainly have cost the sender double postage, and in a characterless little boarding-school ladies' hand:

"My dearest Belinda."

"Dearest—for her to call me 'dearest'! when papa himself used to think 'my dear little girl' sufficient. But Rose must be a hypocrite, even in writing."

"You will be surprised, and *I hope pleased*, to hear that I am coming all the way to the south of France to see you. I am sure, when I look at St. Jean de Luz on the map, it quite takes my breath away. I have always had a horror of the Bay of Biscay, and can never sleep in the train as most people do, and then I am such a coward about strange beds! But of course Spencer will be with me, and as there

have been several cases of small-pox close at hand, and I am so frightened about it, Doctor Pickney says the wisest thing I can do is to pack up my boxes and run. I have been vaccinated three times, and although the doctors say not, I think it always *took a little*. I do hope there is no small-pox about in the south. If you have not been vaccinated already, you might get it done as a precaution before I arrive. I trust, dear, you will find me looking pretty well. I am in mourning still, but of course slight, for poor Uncle Robert has been dead three months; indeed, the milliners scold me for wearing it any longer. But I consult feeling, not fashion, in such things; and what can be more becoming than pale lavender silk richly trimmed, or a white Sultana polonaise edged with black velvet and a *deep fringe*! I wish I knew whether hats or bonnets were best style in foreign watering-places. I have written to 'The Queen' to ask, but I am afraid I shall not get the answer before I start. Nothing is seen in London but those large flat crowns, which never suited me; and the Dolly Vardens have got so dreadfully common! Really, as I often say to Spencer, dress is one long trial. Were it not for those I love, I would—but this is a subject on which I dare not trust myself to speak. My dearest Belinda, I shall have news to tell you when we meet, of the most deeply interesting nature, affecting the future of *us both*. I am glad you have made acquaintance with Augustus Jones. He is a prime favorite of mine—indeed, he *will* make me correspond with him—*young men are*

so foolish—and, as I tell them all, an old woman like me ! What you say about his ‘vulgarity’ is simply ridiculous. How can it matter whether his father sold patent stoves or not ? Has a young man money ? not How was his money made ? is the question the world asks. I only hope he will be still at St. Jean de Luz when I arrive, which may be almost as soon as this letter. Present my compliments to our excellent friend, Miss Burke, and believe me your own affectionate mamma,

Rose.

“ P. S.—Augustus Jones has a villa at Clapham, *elegantly* furnished—everything in the first style ! I have often dined there in his father’s time with poor dear Uncle Robert. Augustus will be an excellent *parti*, I can assure you, Belinda, for *any* girl who may be fortunate enough to win him.”

Belinda crushes the letter together contemptuously, flings it up twice or thrice, ball fashion, into the air, then thrusts it away, still in its crumpled state, out of sight, and lapses back into castle-building.

“ Spain or Clapham.” Just as she has for the third time asked herself this fateful question, an Englishman in full afternoon Hyde Park dress emerges from the Hotel d’Isabella, about fifty yards distant from the little place or square where the girl is sitting, and, espying her, approaches.

The new-comer is young, florid, not distinctly ill-looking as far as features go, but most distinctly vulgar. The way he wears his hat, his jewelry, his necktie—everything about the man, in short—jars on

your taste, you know not wherefore. And then he is mosquito bitten ! And mosquito bites are not wont to improve the expression of the features, or to confer, even on worthier men than Mr. Jones, the air of distinction.

"A villa at Ciapham elegantly furnished—an excellent *parti* for *any* girl who may be lucky enough to win him," thinks Belinda, as the hero of her air-built romance draws near. "What a pity Rose does not appropriate so much good fortune herself ! I must see about making the match up as soon as I get them together."

And with this she laughs aloud ; not as young ladies who have learned to do all things prettily laugh, still less as the British school-girl giggles. Shrill rather, and impish, laughter savoring of malice, not mirth, is the laughter of Belinda O'Shea ! Mr. Jones's face, a spot of warm color at all seasons, has grown to the hue of a well-ripened tomato by the time he reaches her.

"Good afternoon, Miss Belinda. Upon my word, you have found out the only bit of shade in the place. Glad to see you find your own thoughts so amusing." Augustus attempts the drawl of the high-bred swell, as he has seen that personage depicted on the stage ; not with very marked success.

Belinda pushes her ragged hat a little further back from her forehead, stretches out her shabby sandaled feet in the dust, then, glancing up at Mr. Jones much as one small boy glances at another with

whom he is inclined to quarrel, but whose strength he measures, begins to whistle.

"I thought yesterday you told me you meant to give up that—that slightly unfeminine accomplishment of yours," he remarks after a minute.

"And I," retorts the girl, "thought you promised never again to make use of that shocking 'Miss Belinda.' If you had pluck enough to say 'Belinda' outright, I could bear it. But as you have not, and as you seem to think it necessary to call me something, do say 'Miss O'Shea.' You have no idea how *caddish* 'Miss Belinda' sounds."

The tomato hue extends itself over poor Mr. Jones's very ears and neck. "Oh! For the future, then, it's to be 'Belinda' between us, is it? Only too happy on my part, I am sure. But I must ask one thing back." He has taken a place beside her, after carefully selecting a comparatively clean patch of turf on which to deposit his Hyde Park splendor. "I must ask one thing back—that you always call me 'Augustus.'"

She looked at him through and through with fearless child's eyes. "'Augustus!' I hope you have brought me some maccaroons, Augustus? Augustus, try not to kick Costa when you think I am not looking. No, I could not. If I saw you every day till I died, and if I lived to be a hundred years old, I could never call you 'Augustus.' I might do it once," she corrects herself, "half a dozen times, even, if you bribed me handsomely; but from my heart, never."

"In other cases you don't appear to feel much shyness about doings," remarks Mr. Jones, cuttingly. "It seems to me that you call half the English and American fellows in the place by their Christian names."

"Ah, they are only boys," says Belinda, with a smile brimful of unconscious coquetry. "You would not have me 'mister' my chums—the fellows I play paume with—would you?"

"I would not have you play 'paume,' as you call it, at all," replies the young man, in a tone of deliberate, half-tender patronage. "I like a dash of *chic* as well as any man." I am afraid poor Augustus pronounced it chick. "But it must be *chic* of the right kind, bong tong, and all that sort of thing. Now what—what should we think in England of a girl who would be seen playing fives, as you do, and in such company?"

Belinda shoots a sharp glance at him from under her long lashes. I forgot to mention that the child has long lashes, black as night, too, and overshadowing iron-grey eyes. "Not play paume, not dance the bolero, not whistle, not take moonlight walks with Costa! What *would* you have me do, I should like to know, Mr. Jones?"

A London beauty of a couple of seasons' standing could not have brought an elder son more neatly and more innocently to the point. Mr. Jones examines the opera-dancer who reposes in silver on the end of his cane, the huge cameo ring that he wears upon his little finger; then he delivers himself of his sen-

timents thus: "I should like, Miss Belinda—Belinda—I beg your pardon, Miss O'Shea." For the life of him, he cannot get to the familiar Christian name as she sits there in her ragged frock, in her palpable, out-crying poverty, and with her little high-bred face held aloft, and her dark eyes mutely dissecting him and his speech to atoms. "I should like to see you the model in all respects of your mamma. My beau idéal—I mean," says Augustus, suddenly recalling recent French lessons and struggles with French genders, "my belle idéal of everything most to be desired in an English lady is Mrs. O'Shea."

"Belle idéal. Why can you never let a word alone when by extraordinary accident you have got it right?" cries Belinda, cruelly. "Who ever heard of a belle idéal? Ah, and so my stepmamma is your beau idéal of everything to be desired in an English lady, and you would advise me to take her as a model in all respects! Thanks. Now I know exactly what courses to avoid and imitate. No more paume!"

"Paume is the last game I should think an English lady of tong would be seen playing," says Mr. Augustus Jones, oracularly, and giving a contemptuous glance towards the schistera which lies at the girl's side. A schistera, I should explain, is the spoon-shaped basket or hand-shield with which paume is played in the Basque provinces. "I am quite sure Mrs. O'Shea would think as I do about such a game."

"But then you must remember, *I* love it passion-

ately," cries Belinda, "passionately—to distraction! What do I care about being lady-like? If you could play, yourself, you would not be such a muff as to talk about 'tong'! Ah, the moment," cries the child, clasping her graceful dark hands, "the moment of moments when you are twenty all—the ball with the enemy—you see it spinning through the air—you know that the game is to be made off your own schistera—you strike, you—but of course," breaking off, with mild pity of her hearer's ignorance, "of course it's no use talking paume to people who don't understand paume! Well, then comes the bolero. Surely you would allow me one now and then, Mr. Jones, just between the lights, you know, and under the shadow of the trees?"

"I don't mind the bolero, or fandango, or any other of the native cancans, provided they are danced by the right people," answers Mr. Jones with his drawl. "Quite the reverse. When one of these Basque peasant wenches has gone through her barbarous gesticulations, and brings me her tin cup for payment, I put my sous into it with all the pleasure in life."

Belinda's eyes flashed daggers at him. "I cannot imagine your giving a sou to any one on any occasion with pleasure," she exclaims with spiteful emphasis. "And you speak as you do because you know no better! You don't understand the peasants or their dances. You measure everything by your own Clapham tastes, sir! However, we will not argufy." The reader is asked to pardon this and

other linguistic peculiarities on the part of Belinda. "I have my ideas, you yours, and no doubt Rose will back you up in them when she is here. You did not know, by the by, that my mamma was coming to St. Jean de Luz, did you, Mr. Jones?"

Mr. Jones hesitates. Talleyrand's advice as to not following one's first impulse for fear it should be a good one, is, although I dare say he never heard of Talleyrand, a first principle with this excellent young man. Prudence, distrust, disbelief in impulse of all kinds, rather than special genius for the development of kitchen grates, raised Mr. Jones, senior, inch by inch, from a shakedown beneath the counter to a Clapham villa and liveries. Prudence, distrust, disbelief in impulse are qualities born and nurtured in the very life-blood of the son.

"Rose corresponds with you, I know," cries Belinda, scanning his face. "Don't be ashamed of your little weaknesses, Mr. Jones. 'Young men are so foolish,' as Rose says. I can see you know, juss as well as I do, that my stepmamma is coming to St. Jean de Luz."

"Well, yes, I know that Mrs. O'Shea is coming here, certainly," says Augustus, deliberation having shown him, perhaps, that to tell the truth can for once cost nothing. "Indeed, I had a few lines from her, written from Paris, by to-day's post. I have her letter in my pocket," where, however, he has the discretion to let it rest. "As far as I can make out, we shall have the pleasure of seeing Mrs. O'Shea and Captain Temple arrive this evening."

Up rushes the crimson in a flood over Belinda's face. "Captain Temple! I don't know what you mean by Captain Temple!" she exclaims, suspecting what he means only too well, and coloring with hot shame over her own suspicions. "Rose is coming here alone with her maid, of course."

"Oh, of course!" repeats Augustus, with the slow, affected drawl that irritates Belinda to such desperation. "I don't for a moment mean that Mrs. O'Shea, under these or any other circumstances, would act otherwise than with the most lady-like propriety. Still, when one considers everything, Miss Belinda, there is no great wonder in Captain Temple *happening* to travel in the south of France, and in this particular district of the south of France, just at the time when Mrs. O'Shea and her maid *happen* to travel here too!"

His smile, his tone, a sudden scorching remembrance of certain lachrymose allusions in more than one of Rose's recent letters, bring Belinda from suspicion to certainty.

"If I thought—if I could believe such a thing!" she exclaims, then stops short, both sunburnt fists tight clenched, her lips set together like a small fury's.

"If you could believe that two people who loved each other in their youth—I conclude you have heard the romantic story before this?—if you could believe that two people who were in love with each other some dozen or more years ago, were fated to marry and be happy at last, what then?" asks Au-

gustus. "Mrs. O'Shea's marrying again would not interfere with your life much, as far as I can see."

"If Rose marries again, I swear never to speak to her or to her husband while I live," cries Belinda tempestuously. "I will not believe such disgraceful news until she tells it me with her own lips; and I have not the very smallest curiosity in the matter. Is he dark or fair? Good heavens, are you dumb, Mr. Jones? What kind of man, I ask you, is this miserable Captain Temple?"

"Roger Temple is fair—yellow rather, all these Indian fellows are alike; shuts his eyes at you as he speaks—deuced nasty trick for a man to shut his eyes at you as he speaks. I met him once or twice dining at your mamma's before I left town, and we had not two words to say to each other. I don't care for your 'haw-haw,' Dundreary, army men," says Augustus. "Too much of the shop about them for my taste."

"Too much of *what* for your taste?" asked Belinda, with profound disdain. Ah, was not the only human being she ever loved of this same Dundreary, army genus as Captain Temple!

"Too much of the shop—their shop. Too much patronage of other fellows whose line doesn't happen to be in ramrods and pipeclay like their own."

"And I," says the girl, stoutly, "love soldiers, and if ever I marry anybody it shall be a soldier. How different you and I are in everything—difference of the blood, I suppose! We O'Sheas are a fighting family. Two great-uncles of mine fell side

by side across the hills there, at Badajoz"—she indicates by a nod of her head the distant ridge of Spanish Pyrenees—"and my papa was a soldier, and, though it happened he never came in for foreign service, did a great many brave acts, I can tell you, during the different riots and electioneering in Ireland. Most likely you have no connection with the army, Mr. Jones?"

None, excepting a maternal uncle who was an army tailor, Mr. Jones might answer, if he had a mind to speak the truth. He waives the question adroitly enough, however, by returning to the matter in hand. "Well, then, as you are so fond of the fighting profession, Miss O'Shea, you will have an additional reason for loving your new papa."

Belinda snatches up the schistera which lies at her side, and for a moment affairs look threatening. Not much more provocation, evidently, would it need to fire the warlike blood of the O'Sheas that runs in her veins.

"I—I was going to ask you to come down to Harrambour's," says Mr. Jones, springing up hastily to his feet. "Don't be angry with me, Belinda!" He can call her Belinda at the safe distance that separates them now. "And let us make all our differences up over some maccaroons."

Every man, says the cynic, has his price. Belinda's price, as a very short acquaintance has taught Mr. Jones, is maccaroons. Sweet stuff generally may be said to be Belinda's price in the present scraggy, unfledged stage of her moral life. Angel

hair—*cabella de angel*—frozen apricots, chocolate creams, every varied confection, half-French, half-Spanish, with which the shops of St. Jean de Luz abound, is dear to her. But, above all, she adores maccaroons; the specialty of the place, as history shows, even back to the days when the Great Napoleon and the English Duke successively lodged here. And then she is so absolutely penniless! The miserable pittance which comes to her quarterly, after Miss Burke has swallowed the lion's share of her small income—the quarterly pittance, I say, which is vouchsafed to her for dress, postage, pocket-money, confectionery, goes so piteously soon—leaves her so absolutely insolvent when it is gone!

A child of seventeen, without a sou in the world for maccaroons, and an Augustus Jones, his pockets lined with British bank-notes, ready to buy them for her! Does it require a very profound knowledge of human nature to foresee how things are likely to end—unless, indeed, some other actor, offering something sweeter than maccaroons, chance to cross the stage of Belinda's little life-drama!

She hesitates, relents, and a minute later they have quitted the Place, and are making their way down the principal street of the town toward the maccaroon shop. St. Jean de Luz is taking its wonted afternoon siesta at this hour. The awned balconies are deserted; the very churches, filled morning and evening to overflowing, with fans, prayer-books, and flirtations, are empty. A bullock-dray or two are to be seen in the market-place, the

bullocks in their brown holland blouses patiently blinking, with bullock philosophy, at existence, the drivers asleep within the wine shops. A team of close-shorn Spanish mules stand, viciously whisking at the flies with their rat tails, in the shade; the muleteer, his face prone to mother earth, reposes beside them. Other living forms are there none, save an occasional half-broiled Murray-guided Briton, and five or six ghostly cur-dogs—the cur-dogs at St. Jean de Luz *never* sleep. It being low water, the river-mouth and harbor are sending forth “liberal smells of all the sunburned South.” The distant mountain sides are absolutely painful to the eye in their shadeless ochre yellow. Heat, as if a very rain of fire, quivering, piercing, intolerable, is everywhere.

And Mr. Jones does not bear heat gracefully. By the time they reach the maccaroon shop Mr. Jones is in a state of evaporation made visible, and anathematizes the climate, pavement, scenery, people, all in the very ugliest cockney vernacular, and with the ugliest cockney ignorance.

“He is horribly, horribly vulgar!” thinks Bellinda, as she bites her maccaroons and glances from beneath her eyelashes at the dewy, blistered, mosquito-scarred face of her companion. “If maccaroons were only attainable through any other means!”

Which they are not. And the maccaroons are super-excellent, fresh made this morning; and after the maccaroons come a vanilla ice, and a chocolate cream, and more maccaroons! And then—of so generous a temper is Augustus this afternoon—then

they adjourn from the shop to the refreshing shade of the awning outside, and Belinda is told to call for whatever cooling drink she chooses, while Mr. Jones (who holds the firmest English belief as to alcohol and a thermometer at a hundred and ten in the shade going well together) orders himself—oh, in what execrable French—a brandy and seltzer, and prepares to smoke a cigar at her side.

A bizarre love-making, it may be said, in which the lady's favor is to be won by lollipops. But any one who keeps his eyes open must know that what we call the bizarre differences of life are on the surface, merest accidental diversity of local coloring; human nature being much the same whatever dress she wears, whatever quarter of the globe she inhabits. If Augustus Jones were courting some full-grown London Belinda, his offerings would have to be of bracelets, certainly—bracelets, opera tickets, bouquets, as the case might be, instead of sweet stuff. And who, I should like to know, would consider *that* bizarre!

Mr. Jones smokes his cigar; Belinda sips her iced orangeade, Spanish fashion, through a barquilo, beside him; and so a drowsy hour glides away. Then the sun slips westward behind the toppling old scarlet-roofed, many-storied houses that form the seaboard of St. Jean de Luz, and comparative coolness begins to make itself felt in the streets. Little by little shutters open; sleepy faces peep out on balconies; the bullock drivers come lazily forth from the wine shops; the muleteer rises as far as his elbow, rubs

his handsome eyes, swears a little at his mules, crosses himself, and folds a cigarrito. The world is awakening.

"And I must be off," says Belinda, jumping up as the clocks of the town strike five. "We are all in for a match of paume as soon as the sun is off the upper Place."

"'We'! and who are 'we'?" asks Mr. Jones, with a tender smile. The brandy and seltzer has softened him—but, unfortunately, tender smiles lose half their effect when they are associated with mosquito bites!

"Oh, the usual party, Jack Alston and Tom and me against the two Washingtons and Maurice la Ferté. Who will you back? You must not judge by what you saw last night. Jack Alston and I can beat the lot when we play our best."

"I should like to bet that you will let Mr. Jack Alston and his friends play their match without you." And now Augustus rises, now the mosquito-bitten face is affectionately, horribly near Belinda's. "I should like to think that you care just enough for me, Miss O'Shea, to give all these fellows up for once, if I ask you!"

His tone is more earnest than Belinda has ever heard it yet, and she wavers, or appears to waver. The remembrance of maccaroons that are past, the hope of maccaroons that are to come; vanity gratified by a full-grown man, an Augustus Jones though he be, taking so deep an interest in her affairs—all these considerations, and perhaps something a little

deeper than these, sway the girl, and she wavers, casts down her eyelashes, plays irresolutely with the strings of her schistera.

“ You will promise me to play no more at that confounded game, either this evening or any other evening ! ” whispers Augustus with growing emphasis.

Another moment, and Belinda will certainly have committed herself—Heaven knows to what compromising renunciations ! But even as the words rise to her lips, an unexpected ally, against Mr. Jones and on the side of paume-playing, bolero-dancing, and all the other sweet, unlawful pleasures of her vagabond life, appears on the scene.

“ Costa, why Costa, old boy, where have you been all day ? Down, sir, down. When will you learn that Mr. Jones does not value your attentions ? ”

Costa is a grand-looking old Spanish hound, not altogether of purest breed, perhaps, but a noble brute despite the blot upon his escutcheon, possessing much of his nation’s grave dignity of demeanor, and a face brimful of fine dog intellect and feeling. You may see such a head as Costa’s beside the knee of more than one of Velasquez’s portraits.

His acquaintance with Belinda came about haphazard—as everything seems to come about in the girl’s haphazard life.

Some Madrid hidalgo to whom the poor brute belonged happening to be called away to Paris toward the close of last summer’s bathing season, the

dog, with true Spanish indifference, was left upon the streets of St. Jean de Luz to starve. For a time he kept body and soul—what poor dog soul was in him—together as best he might; his lean carcass daily becoming leaner, kicks and blows from housewives who found him unlawfully prowling about their doorsteps more frequent. At last a bone or two came through the skin; the creature's strength was gone—just enough left to drag himself painfully along the gutters and look up with wistful, hungry supplication in the faces of the passers-by.

And so Belinda found him—Belinda, as it chanced, flush of money, her quarter's pittance just paid, and on her road at that moment to the macaroon shop, with all the lightness of spirit a full purse begets.

"What, Costa, my friend!" She knew the dog and his name well; had admired him often in his palmier days, striding majestically along at the hidalgo his master's heels. "Costa, my old friend, have you come to this? Has that *brute* left you alone here to starve?"

She forgot the maccaroons; she took Costa round to the butcher's market, and she gave him to eat; would have had him home and sheltered him but for Miss Burke's stern opposition. "It would better befit Belinda's immortal soul to take thought of the regeneration of humanity than be occupied with the life or death of a miserable cur-dog. A knock on the head and a plunge into the Nivelle were the greatest mercy in such a case. Miss Burke, for her part,

would not mind hiring some man or boy to perform the deed, and—”

“At your peril you get Costa murdered!” cried Belinda, with tragical, mutinous eyes. “Deny him shelter if you like. He must lodge as the beggars lodge, at least till winter comes, and I will feed him. What do I care for humanity? I love the dog! And as for you—hire an assassin, make yourself accomplice in a murder, madam, at your peril!” Thus doubly saving Costa’s life, of such slender value as the poor life was!

And the creature repaid her with that absolute, blind, unstinted gratitude that is one of the cardinal dog virtues—shall we say an exclusive dog virtue? Without a word of explanation he understood the delicacy of the relations between himself and Miss Burke, yet, for Belinda’s sake, never betrayed his knowledge otherwise than by a stealthy, ghastly roll of the eye or grin of the upper lip in that lady’s presence. Of a morning he would sit, demure of demeanor as a bishop, outside the gateway of Miss Burke’s lodgings, waiting for the light step of his little benefactress, but shifting his quarters instantly, and with an air of the most pharisaic innocence, if Miss Burke chanced to appear instead of Belinda. At night he would guard the girl faithfully to the door of her home, but never, no, not even if Belinda in play invited him thereto, would cross the threshold. If it were possible for the quality of self-respect to exist in a dog’s heart, one would say this gaunt, forsaken Spanish hound possessed it.

Self-respect, gratitude, love! I seem to be making a tolerably long list of Costa's virtues; but he had vices enough to counterbalance them. Society generally looked upon him as an abandoned, thievish reprobate, and with good reason; society always has good reason for its condemnatory verdict. How could it be otherwise? How could Costa, supperless, houseless, live the decent Philistine life that had been so easy to him in the well-fed days of the *hidalgo* his master?

As long as Belinda's funds lasted, he ate meat; when these failed he had such crusts and scraps as the girl could save from her own meals and carry away, unseen by Miss Burke, in her pocket. But crusts and scraps were not enough for Costa's sustenance. He must be dishonest or die. And (some Christians have felt the same) he preferred being dishonest. In his youth he had been trained as a sporting dog, and in all the pride of untempted virtue had held by the code of honor of his peers, the arbitrary code which brands the slaughter of a barn-door fowl with indelible disgrace. But with other times, other manners. If nobility oblige, how much more so does an empty stomach! Some lingering scruples, some remnants of the old finer sentiments, Costa had to get over; at first would only scare his victims, next pursue them, but not kill. At last, one autumn twilight, hunger sharp, Belinda, I regret to say, witness of the crime, he murdered a fat old hen asleep upon her roost, devoured, enjoyed her to

her very feathers, and murdered conscience with the act.

The downward path lay smooth enough before Costa now. No man, it is remarked, becomes so finished a scamp as your scamp who was a gentleman once. The rule is not without its parallel as regards the demoralization of dogs. Where an ordinary cur would have committed his highway thefts or murders in a gross sort of bungling way, certain of instant detection, Costa, aided by a hundred remembrances of his old greenwood craft, got through the work like an artist. He became "suspect," as you may imagine. Not a housewife within a couple of miles of St. Jean de Luz but knew him by sight or by reputation. And still he lived. These southern people combine with the most absolute callousness as to animal suffering a curious superstition as to taking animal life. They will see a starving dog die inch by inch, rather than knock him on the head; will bury an obnoxious cat alive, not drown her. Costa lived—a disreputable, idle, lawless existence enough—but with fidelity, love, gratitude to the little girl that had saved him ever strength, ening.

So different of its kind is the deterioration of dog nature from that of man.

When Belinda was out late at night, as too often happened, Costa, with the strength and will to pull down half a dozen Carlists at a time, would keep sentry by her side; when she was playing paume among her not-too-gentle comrades, would sit, wink-

ing his eyes with an air of dignified superiority, in the shade, not interesting himself in the frivolous details of the game, but ready at any time, should dispute arise, to put himself forward as judge and executor of the law on Belinda's side. He knew when the child was glad or sorry, rich or poor. He knew her enemies, knew her friends; and from the first moment of meeting till the present one, had cast ugly looks at the calves of Augustus Jones's legs!

"Try not to be frightened, Mr. Jones," says Belinda, glancing maliciously at the expression of her admirer's face. "Perhaps he won't bite if you keep very quiet. Dogs know so well when people are afraid of them! Have you come for maccaroons, my old Costa, eh? You have, have you? Mr. Jones, Costa says he has come for maccaroons." It may be observed that Belinda has not a grain of false pride on the score of begging alms for her friends. "Costa has come for maccaroons, and I have not a single sou left in the world!"

She stoops down, and with one arm bent fondly round the old dog's neck, looks up, with the prettiest beseeching air imaginable, at Augustus Jones. But Jones buttons up his pockets. He is not altogether a miser, as different sections of the London world have practically learned; will spend money freely enough on riding-horses, bracelets, opera stalls, churches that need showy windows, philanthropic effort that publishes printed lists; on his vices, his virtues *his* anything. But maccaroons for a dog!

This absolute waste, this simple flinging of money for the sake of flinging it into the sea, Mr. Jones cannot stand. Looking upon the folly as a speculative investment, means to a possible end, 'twere different. "You desire to marry yourself, as you consider, well," could some voice whisper to him; "the ambition of your heart has been ever to wed your gold to aristocratic blood; and despairing of better chances, you would fain win this out-at-elbows little Arab, the granddaughter of the great Earl of Liskeard, for your wife. Humor her whims, even this present babyish one, if you would hope to succeed"—could Mr. Jones realize this as truth, the maccaroons were Costa's. But he does not realize it. He is devoid alike of sympathy and of tact; qualities, both of them, springing from imagination, not reason; and goes no further than his own lights illum the path. He detests all dogs, detests Costa in particular with the bitterest hatred, that which springs from fear. And, as I have said, Mr. Jones buttons up his pockets.

"Maccaroons for Costa!" repeats Belinda, stretching out to him a little suppliant sun-burned palm. "Not like them? You should see whether he likes them! Try the experiment. Why, when Maria José was here, we gave him two francs' worth all at once, and he ate them up before you could say 'Jack Robinson.'"

"Did he indeed!" says Augustus, looking disgusted, whether at the allusion to a rival or at the vulgarity of Belinda, who shall say? "Then the

only thing I can remark is, I am sorry Mr. Maria José had not better sense than to waste his money on such absurdity."

Quitting her hold on Costa, Belinda starts to her feet, and stands upright and determined before Augustus; her small child's face flaming red as any pomegranate flower. "Mr. Jones," she exclaims, "if I asked you to give Costa two francs' worth of maccaroons at this moment, do you mean to tell me you would not do it?"

"I should prefer giving the money to the first worthy object of commiseration who happened to pass along the street," Mr. Jones answers, didactically.

"Will you give Costa one franc's worth of maccaroons, now, this instant?"

"I—I never heard of feeding a dog on maccaroons; I think it a doosed ridiculous waste of money," stutters Jones, without offering to put his hand into his pocket. "I can be as liberal as most people, Miss Belinda, on the right occasion; but if I *have* a predilection, and a very strong one, too, it's against seeing good money wasted."

Belinda looks at him, from his mosquito-bitten forehead down to the tips of his Bond-street boots; looks at him, with those clear eyes of hers, not only up and down bodily, but morally through and through.

"Oh! I understand. I know now why Costa hated you from the first. Dogs are not such fools. If you *have* a predilection, you say, 'tis against see-

ing good money wasted. If *I* have a predilection, and a very strong one, too, 'tis for wasting it. Money—bah! what is money? So many dirty bits of silver, stamped with this head or that, and good just for the quantity of sweet stuff it will bring you. To spend, to waste, to scatter money to the winds, is one of my predilections: paume-playing, bolero-dancing, liberty—sweet liberty—are the others! And I am no more likely to change in my opinions than you are in yours. Good-by, Mr. Jones."

She turns on her heel, and, swinging her schistera to and fro, in a way to shock Mr. Jones' nicest susceptibilities, walks off; Costa, his head well erect, as though he felt himself master of the situation, at her side.





CHAPTER III.

LIGHT WEDDED, LIGHT WIDOWED.

Saint JEAN DE LUZ is awakening from its afternoon siesta ; by the time, an hour later, that the Paris train arrives, every nook, every corner of the quaint little Basque town is full of life and color. Castilian nurses, in the gay scarlet bodices and silver buttons of their order, are airing olive-faced babies in the Place ; water-sellers, with their sing-song "*Agua ; quien quiere agua ?*" throng the streets ; men smoking their final cigarrito before dinner are to be seen under the awnings of the different cafés. The younger women are ogling from behind their fans, the old ones resuming their eternal tresillo on the balconies. Smoking, flirting, and card-playing—in short, the three great occupations of Spanish life—going on actively. And St. Jean de Luz, at the height of its brief bathing season, is as completely Spanish as any town in the Peninsula ; the natives vanishing like mice into cellars and attics the moment good Spanish dollars can be got in exchange for their first and second floors.

As six o'clock strikes, a carriage draws up, with the extra flourishing of whips indicative of new arrivals to be fleeced, before the Grand Hotel Isabella. Waiters, chambermaids, mine host himself, all come out, salaaming, to secure their prey; and forth steps an elegant fool of the very first water—English, and of the sex whose helplessness is its charm—upon the pavement. A clothes-artist might know that this fair creature is dressed in what the profession have agreed to call “slight mourning.” To the uninitiated eye her attire, a cunningly-devised combination of white and lilac, is suggestive of no other grief than the despairing envy of all other women who may behold it, and the absolute collapse and annihilation of man.

“*Mes bagages—où est mes bagages?*” sighs a soft voice in that curious language known as French in suburban boarding-schools, but unintelligible south of the Channel. “*Dix bagages, tous adressés,* and a piece of blue ribbon on each. *Dix, ten—oh, would anybody make them understand! Dix.*” Holding up ten helpless lavender-gloved fingers. “Really, Spencer, I think you might try to be of some little use.”

At this appeal another elegant fool (but of second water—a cheap copy of the first, flimsy glace silk instead of richest cord) steps languidly forth from the carriage. She too is admirably helpless, and she too speaks a tongue incomprehensible out of England; the polyglot smatter of advertising abigails who “talk three languages with ease, and are will-

ing to undertake any duties, not menial, while on the Continent."

They address themselves to the host, to the waiters, to the coachman. Nobody understands them; they understand nobody. "If I had only bespoken Belinda!" sighs the lady piteously. "If you had had the slightest consideration, Spencer, you might have reminded me to telegraph to Miss O'Shea."

The words have scarcely left her lips when a knot of little lads, English and French, shoulder their way along the street—lads from about eleven to fourteen, sunburnt, dare-devil looking young Arabs enough; barefooted, most of them, and with schisteras in hand. At the word "Belinda," the foremost of the gang turns, and nudges the boy who comes next. They all stop, they all stare; one of them gives a low, meaning whistle across his shoulder, and in another second or two Belinda appears upon the scene, her battered hat more battered than when we saw her first, two hours ago; the flush of heat and victory on her brow, her espadrilles so kicked to pieces that how they keep upon her feet at all is miraculous. Belinda, like her associates, schistera in hand, with Costa, who has been rolling in the dust, and has a more disreputable look than usual, at her heels. She passes along, whistling, forgetful of Mr. Jones and their quarrel, of Rose's letter and threatened arrival, forgetful of everything except the game of paume she has just played and won, when

suddenly the elegant fool number one looks full into the girl's face and, electrified, recognizes her.

"What, Belinda, can that be you?"

"What, Rose, arrived already!"

"How dirty she is!" (mentally).

"How painted she is!" (all but aloud.)

And then the ladies kiss; hugely to the entertainment of Belinda's comrades, who have certainly never before beheld Miss O'Shea engaged in any of these feminine amenities.

"You—you have grown, I think," says Rose, scrutinizing with horror-stricken eyes the girl's ragged, dust-stained clothes, and remembering with all the shame of which her small soul is capable that the lady's maid scrutinizes them also. "And you are sunburnt—you are very sunburnt, Belinda."

"I should say I was, just! If you had been playing paume under such a sun as this, you would be sunburnt, too. But where is your maid? You don't mean to say you have travelled all the way from Brompton to St. Jean de Luz alone?"

Rose on this gives a side-glance at her gorgeous abigail, and whispers in Belinda's ear: "That is my maid, my dear, and the most helpless, the most unbearable creature in the world. Still, as I had her from Lady Harriet Howes—and a particular favor her ladyship made of it—I don't like to change. It's an immense thing," plaintively, "for one's maid to have lived in a *good* style of place, you know."

"I know?" repeats Belinda, with her mocking gamin laugh. "Yes, I am just the fellow to know

about fine ladies and their maids, am I not ! But do you mean to say, Rose, that you and that magnificently dressed young woman have travelled from one end of France to the other without getting run away with?"

"I—I have not been altogether without an escort," responds the widow, and blushes.

Belinda thinks she must have been wrong about the paint ; not knowing that there are women who blush and paint too.

"I was fortunate enough in Paris to come across a very old and dear friend, who took me about a little, and then, somehow or another, I met with him again at Bordeaux. Curious coincidence, was it not ?" laying her plump hand with girlish playfulness upon Belinda's slender arm. "But I have more curious things still to tell you when we are alone. *Mes bagages.*" This to the dignified Basque coachman, who, with the air of a prince, his cap on his head, stands waiting to be paid. "Belinda, will you make that savage comprehend that I want my luggage ? I'm sure," says Rose, "my French must be better than most people's ; for I had the prize two halves following at Miss Ingram's—poor mamma cried, I had worked myself to such a shadow. But the French speak with such an extraordinary accent there's really no understanding them. Ten large boxes, tell him, each with a blue ribbon and—oh, the awful dog ! Some one take the awful dog away !" Costa has been critically examining the new-comers, mistress and maid, and conveys his poor opinion of

them to Belinda by a short gruff bark. "I thought all the dogs in France had to be muzzled by law. Spencer, Spencer! Get between me and that *monster!*"

It is long before Rose can be made to believe that her precious boxes will be brought from the station like all other people's boxes, on the hotel omnibus. Then, when rooms have to be selected for her, arise new troubles. She must have a bedroom communicating with a drawing-room (and the drawing-room must have a balcony *covered* with flowers), a bedroom near some one else's in case of fire—a bedroom not too near some one else's in case of their talking in their sleep. And Spencer's must be on the same floor. And is there any way of ascertaining who slept in the rooms last? Will Belinda request the people of the house to swear that there has been no one here with the small-pox this summer?

"Swear? Why, a Basque will swear anything you ask him," cries the girl mischievously. "Of course people with small-pox have slept here this summer, as they have at every hotel in the place. What does it matter, Rose? You will be so mosquito-bitten, like our friend Augustus, by tomorrow morning, that you won't recognize yourself in the glass. A touch of small-pox more or less cannot matter."

With which scanty consolation Rose, the tears rising in her foolish, frightened eyes, has to be contented.

"If I only knew where all these dreadful doors
3*

lead to," she sighs, looking round her with pretty timidity as soon as Mistress Spencer, her nose well in the air, has retired to inspect her own apartment. "But I have heard such stories of what goes on in foreign hotels—it was all in the papers once; 'Judas doors' I think they called them; and indeed the way Frenchmen stare at me in the street is enough. I declare nothing would ever tempt me to go out on the Continent alone."

She languishes away to a mirror, and taking off her veil, begins to dust her delicate rose-and-white face with her cambric handkerchief. I use the word "dust" intentionally. Belinda, under the same circumstances, would rub her sun-tanned skin as vigorously as a housemaid rubs mahogany. But women of fashion have complexions, not skins. Rose treats hers fearfully, tenderly, as you will see a connoisseur treat the surface of some fine enamel or other piece of perishable art; not, it may be, without reason.

"I have grown quite an old woman, have I not?" She puts a smile on the corners of her lips, then turns and presents her face for the girl's admiration. "I dare say you would hardly have known me if you had met me, without warning, in the street? Now, tell me the honest truth, dear; I hate flattery."

Rose, at this present time of her mortal life, has approached as near as it is possible for a good-looking woman ever to do to her fortieth year. But, if there be truth in that delightful French adage that a woman is the age she looks, we may call her nine and twenty;

of course I mean, after her art labors are over for the day.

" Few sorrows hath she of her own," this comely, silver-tongued, bewitching widow, and no sorrows of others could by any possibility make her grieve. So she is without wrinkles. The lines in which strong love, strong grief, strong feelings of any kind grave their story on human faces, are all absent from hers. Round cheeks, breaking into dimples like a baby's when she smiles; wide-open eyes, of that unchanging yellow-hazel that often accompanies flaxen lashes and eyebrows; the most charming, most insignificant little nose you ever saw, and a mouth not altogether good-tempered by nature perhaps, but trained to every artificial "sweetness" of smile and word: such is Rose. Her hair, that once was palest hempen, is now as auriferous a copper as Bond-street chemistry can make it, and a marvel of luxuriance; such exquisite plaits and tresses, such sly-nestling, unexpected little ringlets! (Has Belinda forgotten the old dinnerless days, when her tired fingers had to crimp and plait and curl in the shabby London lodgings?) Her figure is plump—would be over-plump, but for the corset-maker's torturing aid, and Rose's heroic resolve *never* to own a waist of more than twenty-two inches. Her complexion, fair naturally, improved by art, is—well, a complexion, not a skin: need I say more?

Belinda examines her with eyes that would pierce all the enamel, all the rice powder in the world. "We none of us get younger, Rose; you no more

than other people. But you look well in health. I am surprised to see you out of mourning," she adds, giving a cold glance at her stepmother's white-and-lilac finery. "Has your Uncle Robert been dead six or eight weeks? I do not remember exactly."

"Eight weeks! Oh, Belinda dear, how thoughtless you are." Rose, to do her justice, feels far more amiably disposed towards Belinda than Belinda feels toward Rose. Life flows at its smoothest just at present with Cornelius O'Shea's widow. Dear Uncle Robert opportunely removed to a better world; his will all that could be desired by surviving relations; good looks within the reach of one's own industry still, and a lover, handsome, young, well-born, to crown all. How can Rose feel anything but amiable, especially now that she sees how unfortunately plain this poor little alien stepdaughter of hers has grown up! "Uncle Robert has been dead more than three months, and I am only just in second mourning. The milliners tell me it's ridiculously deep, and indeed I remember seeing Lady Harriet wear scarlet less than six weeks after old Miss Howe's death; but I—I know *what* a friend I have lost! Of course, I could not enter upon these delicate subjects in a letter, Belinda, but Uncle Robert has left me everything, unconditionally. Money, house, plate—everything. I only hope I may be guided!" says Rose, turning up her eyes, "guided to make a right use of what is intrusted to me."

Colder and harder grows the expression of Be-

linda's face. Can the girl forget by whose absence, whose death, Rose's good fortune was purchased?

"Oh, you are very lucky, Rose, very! But, somehow, I cannot find words just now to wish you joy. What are your future plans? Are you going to live in that big house at Brompton all alone?"

Mrs. O'Shea's eyes sink to the ground. "I—I have many things to talk to you about, Belinda, as I hinted in my letter. But when I have told all my little story I am sure you will feel *for me* in my position. The romance of two young lives!" murmurs Rose, modestly apologetic. "Love sacrificed to duty! A heart slowly breaking during a dozen years! Belinda, my dear girl, you have heard—you must have heard of Roger Temple?"

But not by a word or look will Belinda assist the widow's bashfulness, or help her forward in her confession. "I believe that I have heard of such a person somewhere," she answers, in a tone of the most freezing indifference. "Your friend Mr. Jones mentioned him, I think, Rose. But I pay so little attention to anything Mr. Jones says!"

"Belinda, when we were both young—the day will come, I hope, child, when you will sympathize more with the trials and temptations of others—when we were both young, Roger Temple and I first met. And he cared for me."

Dead silence; the widow confused, and stroking down the folds of her silk dress with her white fingers; Belinda's slip of a figure standing upright beside the window, her arms folded, her lips and

eyes about as "sympathetic" as though they had been carved in granite.

"He cared for me—too much for his own peace—but duty stood between us, and we parted!" Of this the reader shall know more than by Rose's hazy utterances. "We parted. Fate was hard upon us both. And now—Belinda, must I say more?"

"Say everything, please, if you want me to understand you."

"Roger Temple has asked me to be his wife at last, and I—"

"And you—are going to be married again!" interrupts Belinda cruelly. "For the third time! Then all I can remark is, you are very fond of being married, Rose."

A heartless, unwomanly speech enough; but Belinda, like many other raw girls of her age, is absolutely heartless in matters of love; and at this moment passionate, unreasoning jealousy against the rival of her dead father is sending the blood to her brain too quickly for her to be very nice in the choice of words.

"I'm sure I don't know how you can be so unfeeling," says Rose, almost crying. "But you were always the same. Even when you were little, you had no more sensibility than a stone. And Roger always expresses himself so beautifully about you, and the Temples are such a good family, and everything; and then to say that I—I, of all women living, am fond of being married! I do hope, Belinda, whatever your own opinions may be, you will not

express yourself in this most heartless and indelicate manner before Captain Temple!"

"Captain Temple?" repeats Belinda, all innocence. "Why, when am I ever likely to see Captain Temple?"

"You will see him in St. Jean de Luz to-day."

"Captain Temple in St. Jean de Luz! You mean to tell me, Rose, that you *and a young man* are travelling about the world together?"

And Belinda, the first and last time in her life such hypocrisy can be recorded of her, puts on an air of outraged virtue edifying to behold.

"Roger met me in Paris and again in Bordeaux," says poor Rose, blushing through her rouge with vexation. "Roger was the old friend I told you of. And there was always Spencer—and we have taken care never to stop at the same hotel even. He has gone now to look for a lodging in quite another part of the town. If you knew, Belinda, if you only knew what a soul of honor Roger Temple has, you would not talk so lightly!"

"Ah, but you must remember I know nothing at all about him," retorts the girl, "and my education does not dispose me to take any man's honor on trust. Never mind, Rosie," she goes on with an assumption of pitying complaisance; "I am shocked, I own, but I will keep what I think to myself. I will not say a word, even to Burke."

"And you will behave with feeling, with consideration to Roger Temple, for my sake?"

Before the girl can answer, a man's step sounds in the corridor, a knock comes at the door.

"*Entrez,*" cries out Belinda, in her clear young voice.

"My things!" sighs the widow all in a tremor, her heart reverting to the possessions which lie nearer to it even than her lover—her bandboxes.

And the door opens.

"Roger! You have found your way already, then?" Rose exclaims with rather a forced little laugh, and retreating hastily from the light that falls unbecomingly full upon her through the open window. "Belinda, dearest, my very old acquaintance, Captain Temple. Now mind," with infantine candor, "I shall never forgive either of you if you don't fall in love with each other *at once*. I have been like that always—Miss Ingram used to say I was quite absurd. Whoever I am fond of must be fond of all my friends!"

But, long before Rose has ceased twittering her small falsities, Belinda's eyes and Roger Temple's have met—met and spoken the truth.

"In life as on railways," a master hand has written, "at certain points, whether you know it or not, there is but an inch, this way or that, into what train you are shunted."

Into what train has Belinda's passionate heart been shunted, all unknowing, at this moment!



CHAPTER IV.

WHAT MEN CALL LOVE.

ROSE spoke of the romance of two young lives, of love sacrificed to duty, of a heart slowly breaking during a dozen years. This we may set down as the poetic form of the story about herself and Roger. Now let us have it in the prose.

And in the first place, I would remark, that if Roger Temple's heart has been breaking during the length of time Rose imagines, either it must have been an extraordinarily tough heart when first the process was set up, or the process is one that slightly affects a man's outward strength and health. He is a well-knit, handsome-looking fellow ; a little sallow, perhaps, like most men whose digestions have been too long tried by climate and curry, and with a touch of Indian listlessness in his English honest blue eyes. But as to heart-break, wasting in despair, moral dyspepsia of any kind ! Ask his brother officers, the comrades who know him best, what man in the regiment they would consider the most absolutely free

from all such disorders, and ten to one, the answer will be "Roger Temple." A first-rate shot, a bold rider, a capital fellow at the bivouac or mess table—these are the things you will hear respecting Roger among men. And as regards softer matters? Oh, well, flirtation and young ladies are not very much in old Roger's line. If marriage is fated to overtake him, if the best fellow on earth is fated to be spoilt, it will have to be done by a *coup de main*. Roger might not have the heart to say "No" to a very pretty woman if she asked him outright to marry her; but he would certainly never have the energy to undertake the preliminaries of courtship himself.

Thus the coarse, indiscriminative voice of his fellow men. How account for the discrepancy?

You remember Holmes's fancy as to the three distinct personalities to be found in every man: 1st. The man himself, the real veritable Thomas. 2d. Thomas's ideal Thomas. 3d. The ideal Thomas of Thomas's friends. To these I would add the ideal Thomas of Thomas's mistress—a man in love, judged with a woman's power of judging, from a woman's standpoint, being a creature as totally strange to the poor fellow's male friends and acquaintances as to his own consciousness.

The story, in the prose form, is simply this: Rose, married in her girlhood to an elderly London lawyer (with whom, as an absolute nonentity, the conventional husband of a charming wife, this little history has no concern) and launched into a narrow circle of dull professional respectability, was, at six-and-

twenty, as really fresh and ingenuous a young person as ever breathed. Neither perruquier nor Bond street chemist needed then. Her flaxen hair, smoothly braided according to the fashion of the day, adorned her youthful face. Her complexion, innocent of cosmetic, was, in spite of some few freckles, like a just opened dog-rose. Same order of intellect, same depth of heart as now; no knowledge of the world, save of her own little pharisaical Bloomsbury Square world; small scope for vanity, less for sentiment. So Roger Temple met and loved her.

The Indian mutiny was just over at the time, and Roger, a fair-faced boy of nineteen, had come back, wounded, after his first dark taste of soldier's work, to England. He made Rose Shelmadeane's acquaintance at an East London dinner party, to which a family lawyer of the Temples, or other unimportant agent, had led him; made her acquaintance, sat opposite to her at table, and, not knowing, till dessert, at least, that she was the crown and blessing of another man's life already, conceived for her as wild a passion as ever foolish lad conceived for still more foolish woman since the world begun.

The London season was at its height, even Rose's humdrum life enlivened by an unwonted share of parties, theatre-going, drives in the park, visits to the Zoological; country cousins who must be amused staying in the house. Roger saw her, dogged her, worshipped her everywhere. One of the country cousins being female and unmarried, it might be assumed that Mr. Temple's attentions were honorably

matrimonial. Mr. Teimble being well-born, young, handsome, of good expectations, was it not a manifest duty to offer him encouragement?

Thus Rose, with small platitudes, stifled her small conscience for a fortnight or so. Then the end came—the end to the prologue, not the play.

Watching the hippopotamus together one July Sunday afternoon at the Zoological, the country cousins, the nonentity of a husband, all but within earshot, young Master Roger made a fool of himself. In stammering, passionate whispers, told Mrs. Shelmadeane a secret which Mrs. Shelmadeane had been calmly aware of for some time past, but which it was shocking, oh, unendurably shocking, even to think of, the moment the confession happened to find its way into words.

She walked away from him, her fair young matron face ablaze, and, with the air of a new Cornelia, laid her hand upon her husband's arm. Three evenings later—Rose twenty-six, remember, Roger nineteen—was waltzing with him at a ball to which duty bade her chaperone her country cousins at the Hanover Square rooms.

Mr. Temple had been wicked—so wicked that it really took one's breath away to think of it—in daring to regard her, an honored wife, save with feelings of iciest respect and esteem. But then Rose, gentle soul, felt constrained to pity the poor misguided fellow, to lead him, if it might be, into better ways. And that Bloomsbury Square life and husband of hers, illumined by present experience, were

so hideously monotonous, and the homage of a man, handsome, young, distinguished like Roger, was so honey-sweet to vanity. And then think how the papers had spoken of Mr. Temple's bravery in India; think of all the horrid Sepoys he must have killed, his arm still in that interesting black sling. What could Rose do but accord the lad the friendship for which he pleaded, and agree to forget that fatal, eerring, not altogether charmless, moment when they watched the hippopotamus together at the Zoo.

A better woman, or a worse one, a woman inspired by imagination or guided by experience, might have been terrified at such a position. Good, passionless, unimaginative, self-saturated Rose, the first little cold shock of the plunge over, felt no terror at all. What she did feel strongest, I think (when one can disinter it sufficiently for analysis from the mass of small vanities, triumphs before partnerless country cousins, etc., in which it was embedded), was—gratified sense of power.

“Scratch a slave’s skin, you find a tyrant underneath.”

Rose, like some other millions of her sisters, had been a slave from her birth, first as a girl then as a wife—I speak of moral servitude, of course. All at once she found herself in the position of a ruler; and she used her new prerogative as human beings who are not to power born are apt to use it.

The young fellow gave up for her his time, his friends, his pleasures; gave up for her his life, and received in return what? Sermons, a soiled white

glove or two, and enough half-dead flowers (he has some of these in his possession still) to fill a respectable herbarium.

By degrees the story got known, not in Rose's starched Bloomsbury Square circle, but among Roger Temple's bachelor friends, most of whom, indeed, contrived to gain a glimpse of Mrs. Shelmadeane. Heavens, what a common-place, dowdy little mortal poor Roger's divinity was pronounced to be by men not, like himself, under the glamour of passion! Pretty, if you will, the kind of red-and-white stupid beauty you will meet a dozen times a day in any provincial town; but nothing, positively nothing more. And Roger of all others, with his fastidious tastes, his high-flown boyish ideal of feminine grace and refinement, to have lost his senses about this little Bloomsbury Square prude! Roger, to whom half the best houses in town stood open, upon whom good and handsome and well-born women by the score would have smiled, had he so chosen!

The infatuation lasted out the London season. Then old Shelmadeane carried his wife off to Margate—tardily suspicious, perhaps, as to the kind of sacrifice she was making to duty—and Roger's leave of absence came to an end. He was angry, bitter, sick at heart; his divinity during their last interview having sermonized and sympathized, and altogether tortured him beyond measure; determined to return to India without seeing her again, determined to despise, to forget her. He determined all this; likelier than not would have carried it into execu-

tion to the letter—at nineteen so much is possible to the human heart—had Mrs. Shelmadeane been willing. But Mrs. Shelmadeane was very far indeed from willing.

She was (I make the statement advisedly, unconditionally, so as not to have to go over the same ground again), both now and hereafter, one of the most rigidly virtuous women, as far as conduct goes, that ever breathed. She was not certainly at that early period of her life, in any ordinary sense of the word, a coquette. But she loved her new taste of power with all the faculties for loving nature had bestowed upon her, and for no consideration, short of saving her soul from actual transgression, would have given her slave back his freedom. He must look forward to nothing; not even to the day when he might legitimately claim her hand. She would feel herself—oh dear!—the guiltiest of creatures if she could encourage anybody to look forward with hope to anybody else's death. What is such hope, Rosie would say, piously shaking her blonde head, but another kind of murder? Mr. Temple must look forward to nothing in the future, must ask for nothing in the present, must always remember, please, that she was married to a man whose *moral worth* she respected, always speak and act as if Mr. Shelmadeane were present. But whether he remained in England, or whether he went back to India, Roger Temple must not regain his freedom!

She wrapped up her feelings, even to her own soul, in the very prettiest tinsel paper of all hypoc-

risy's store. To let that poor boy depart in his present frame of mind, would be to let him depart desperate. He might even go and marry some Dreadful Creature in revenge, as men with blighted affections have been known to do, and she would have the burthen on her conscience. Who should say what the effect of a perfect reconciliation, of a few solemn sisterly words at parting, might have upon all the poor young fellow's future career?

And she wrote to him—a sweet little plaintive kind of note, in her school-girl hand, with her school-girl phrases; that, also, Roger Temple keeps still! Accidentally Mr. Shelmadeane had heard in the city that Mr. Roger Temple was going back to India at once. Surely he did not mean to start without bidding his sincerest friends and well-wishers adieu? They had gone to Margate for change, and Margate was rather dull, Rosie confessed ingenuously. But Mr. Shelmadeane, on the whole, complained less of his gout, so she must be grateful. And they dined at six. And Mr. Shelmadeane was always at home, except on Mondays and Tuesdays. When would Mr. Temple come?

Neither on a Monday or a Tuesday, as some older men, versed in the world's ways, might, after the receipt of such a note, have ventured upon doing. For no personal gratification would young Roger have abused the angelic, childlike simplicity of the woman he loved. Honorably, quixotically, on a day when he was certain of finding the husband

at home, he went down to Margate, and for the last time held Mrs. Shelmadeane's white hand in his.

What a parting scene it was to him! Dinner first—with the old lawyer prosing politics and grumbling over the dressing of his turbot; his wife, with her girlish innocent face, smiling nuptial smiles at him across the table. Then dessert, torture of tortures, when Rosie insisted upon leaving her husband and "his" friend alone. Finally the half hour's stroll on the beach, "just to smoke *one last* cigar with poor Mr. Shelmadeane," said Rosie, a tremor discernible to Roger, if to no one else, in her soft voice. For about three minutes out of this half hour—divinest, cruelest moments Roger's young life had experienced—chance willed that they should be alone. And in these their farewells were spoken; a madness of farewells, among the Margate bathing machines. And then old Shelmadeane pounced down upon them. "A quarter to nine, sir. Unless you mean to miss your train, you must be off." And for a dozen shifting, fateful years they saw each other's faces no more.

Long letters passed between them, with or without Mr. Shelmadeane's knowledge—I refrain from speaking with certainty on this point—but letters certainly that Mr. Shelmadeane or any one else in the world might have read with safety. Rose, indeed, half thought at times that her victim repressed all allusion to his tortures too successfully. Every mail, every second mail at first; then once in three or four months; then twice a year. So the correspondence

attending Roger's ill-starred passion was carried on.
At last Mr. Shelmadeane died.

And Roger Temple, of course, flew to England to put in first claim for the possession of his beloved one's hand? No, Roger Temple did nothing of the kind. He was away up the country, pig-sticking, when the letter containing the news of Rosie's widowhood reached him, after some delay. And he loved sport passionately. And the two or three men who formed the party happened to be his closest friends. And must not weeds be worn a decent time before they are replaced by wedding favors? Considering Rosie's fine propriety of sentiment, her highly-strung, shrinking nature, could a man dare—Well, 'twas a curious little imbroglio altogether, highly illustrative of human weakness in the matter of attainable and unattainable desires. But our business, at present, being rather with the chronicling of fact than the depiction of feeling or motive, I proceed.

Roger neither rushed to England nor wrote any letter designed to compromise his Rosie's newly-gained liberty. It must be remembered that he had now been wasting in despair during a good many years; also that men get into the habit of everything, even of hopeless passion, and against their better reason may feel disturbed by having to abandon a settled mode of thought. Like the proverbial Frenchman who exclaims when, after a lifetime's separation, he is about to be lawfully united to the woman he loves, "But what shall I do with my

evenings?" Roger Temple, on old Shelmadeane's death, might have been tempted to ask himself, "But what shall I do with my despair?"

"The greatest charm of a married woman," says a spiteful dramatist, "is invariably—her husband!"

When Roger's foolish lips first stammered their secret in the Zoological Gardens, or trembled out their mad farewells upon the Margate beach, it would have been hard to convince him that Mrs. Shelmadeane's greatest charm was Mr. Shelmadeane. But time sharpens many an epigram that seems pointless to us in our youth.

He wrote the widow as exquisitely-delicate a letter of condolence as was ever penned; putting himself and his own selfish hopes and fears utterly away in the background; dwelling wholly on her and on her loss. He spoke tenderly, but with vagueness, of the long years of their separation; he spoke with greater vagueness still of the day of their possible reunion. Of marriage, of anything that could by possibility be construed into a hint of marriage, he spoke not a word.

An ordinarily intelligent woman, before she had read such a letter to the end, would have known that her lover's love for her was over. Rose, guided by the irrefragable logic of a fool, deduced from it only a new proof of her slave's devotion to her welfare.

"There is one, far distant, who adores me, but who is too high-souled, too generous, to think of anything but my grief!" she would say to Major O'Shea, who got an introduction to the pretty widow,

and indeed set steadily to work love-making, before her crape was six weeks old. "Ah, Major O'Shea, if *you* had only the conscientiousness, the noble, forbearing, unselfish nature of that poor fellow in India!"

And then Cornelius would respond to the effect of his heart being stronger than his reason, of his impetuous feelings (he was nearer fifty than forty at the time, and had been in love, after one fashion or another, since he wore jackets)—his impetuous feelings hurrying him beyond the cold bounds of conventional decorum. And the widow would sigh and blush, and wipe a tear or two, and call him a sad, sad man, as she yielded her hand to be kissed. And the upshot of it all was, that the next news Roger Temple got of Rose Shelmadeane was a flaming announcement in the "Times" of her infidelity to him; by special license, an archdeacon and three or four of the lesser clergy assisting, at St. George's, Hanover Square.

Singular perversity of men's nature! The news of this marriage cost him not only the most poignant jealousy, but a revival of his love in all its first fresh ardor. The existence of a husband, of any husband, seemed really some necessary, mysterious condition of Roger Temple's passion. You should have seen the letter of good wishes that he wrote the bride; bitterest veiled reproach discernible through every courteous phrase, every pleasant little congratulatory message to Major O'Shea! Rosie cried herself almost plain for the day after receiving it; hid it

jealously from Cornelius, to whose philosophic mind the whole matter, you may be sure, would have been one of profoundest indifference ; and wrote Roger a pleading, self-extenuating reply by return of mail, with three violets—ah, did Captain Temple remember the bunches of violets he used to bring her during the *happy days* of their friendship in Bloomsbury Square ?—enclosed.

And Captain Temple, Rose has had his own word for it since, kissed violets and letter both, and set up the writer on the old pedestal in his imagination—I was very nearly writing his heart—that she had ever held.

Roger himself stands, hat in hand, all this time awaiting Belinda's reception of him, we will have done, in as few words as possible, with retrospect of the love story. Some slight insight into Rose's domestic grievances as Mrs. O'Shea, the reader has had already ; we need not further enlarge upon them. Cornelius spent her money, neglected her, went to America, where his fate awaited him. And Rose, on her Uncle Robert's death, found herself once more free—free and with a handsome little income, villa at Brompton, plate, linen, and accessories, at her own disposal.

And then it was that she and her old lover looked again upon each other's faces. Roger had returned to England unexpected by his friends, his long leave having been given him some months earlier than he anticipated ; and on a certain May night, Rose at that moment believing him to be thousands of miles

away in India, knocked at the door of the Brompton villa and inquired, in a voice whose accents he vainly strove to command, if Mrs. O'Shea was at home.

It was late for a visit of ceremony, between ten and eleven o'clock, and the starched-looking butler of occasion who answered his knock informed him pompously that Mrs. O'Shea was at home, but not visible to strangers. Mrs. O'Shea had had company to dinner, and—

"Mrs. O'Shea will see me," interrupted Roger.
"You need not even announce me. I am expected."

And in another minute he found himself among the wax-lights and guests and brand-new gilding and upholstery of Rose's drawing-room.

He slipped in, unannounced, as he desired, and looked round the assemblage in vain for Rose. Seven or eight women, of quasi-fashion, bare-shouldered, jewelled, flower-decked, were present. He looked among them in vain for the modest face and smoothly braided blonde head of Rose Shelmadeane.

At last a fluffy-haired, brilliantly complexioned—alas, that I must write it!—middle-aged lady came forward to him and bowed; a lady extremely over-dressed or underdressed—as you like to term it. "I am not aware that I have the honor—" she began, looking at him strangely.

And then he knew her voice.

Poor Rose, if she could have seen into her quondam lover's heart just at that moment!

He watched her during the next hour or so with feelings about equally balanced of disappointment

and blank surprise. Every woman's good looks must decline after the lapse of the twelve best years of her maturity, and Rose's had really, in the common acceptation of the phrase, "worn well." But it was not any fading due to age, it was not time's natural footprints on cheek or brow, that shocked him thus; it was the absolute, startling, *transformation* of her whole personality!

Soberest, most dove-like of young matrons at twenty-six, Rose, a dozen years later, had developed into the very friskiest of mature sirens, all her girlish promise of silliness ripened into a bounteous harvest of meridional folly. The lint-white, smooth-braided locks were copper-gold now, frizzled high in wondrous monstrous pyramids above her head, with out-lying curls and puffs and chignons that defy description. The faint rose-bloom complexion had become definite pearl and carmine, the pale eyebrows grown dark; the eyes, not wholly innocent of belladonna, were a little fixed and hard; the decorous half-high dress of the old Bloomsbury Square days was replaced by—well, by the drapery of a Greek statue.

Roger, who had lived so long away from London, did not know that this is the received way in which the modern English matron of repute "grows old gracefully," and, as I said, gazed at poor Rose's full-blown charms with a sensation curiously blent of amazement and repulsion; a sensation, let me add, of which he was himself heartily ashamed.

This lasted till the departure of Rose's guests left them alone. Then, hearing more of the old, sweet,

appealing voice—no meretricious change had affected that—and his eyes, it may be, growing accustomed to the outward plastering of his ruined idol, Roger's heart grew softer.

He had not really dined, Mrs. O'Shea discovered; had arrived in London late that afternoon, and, forgetful of bodily sustenance, had rushed away to call on her at once. So a little supper was organized, accompanied by a bottle of Uncle Robert's best champagne. And then this man and woman, who had played at love so long, began looking into each other's eyes, to talk of all that they had suffered (in imagination or reality) since they parted. And the cruel intervening years faded away. They were whispering beside the hippopotamus, they were murmuring farewells upon the Margate beach, again. And by and by Rose's hand, youthful and white still, found its way into Captain Temple's. It trembled; he pressed it to reassure her. Rose, with a sigh, made a feint of moving away. And then, for the first time in their lives, their lips met, and Roger's fate was sealed.

The wax-lights had burnt low by now, and Rose kept her face well in shadow, nay, hid it bashfully out of sight, on her lover's breast. And when he kissed her beautiful golden hair it never occurred to him to think from what dead head it might have been sheared; and when at last she lifted up her face to falter out softest promises of life-long truth, he did not even see the deposit of rice powder it had left upon his waistcoat!

Who loves, cavils not ; and Roger Temple, or Roger Temple's imagination, loved, during this hour's intoxication at least.

What he thought and felt next morning, when he had to review his position, and Mrs. O'Shea's complexion by daylight, none but Roger Temple ever knew.

He was not, it must be borne in mind, a ladies' man, had associated little with women during the later years of his life, had studied them less. And his reverence for the whole sex was extreme—based rather on ideal foundations, indeed, than on fact. If sometimes the sense of his mistake galled him, if sometimes he felt the shame inseparable from the position of a lover who loves not, you may be sure that Rose and the world never found it out. Rosie loved him ! What matters some disparity of years if a woman's affections be young ! When the fruit after which a man has longed for years drops between his lips at last, has he a right to complain because time has somewhat over-mellowed its flavor ?

So Roger would fain argue himself into good conceit with his bargain, so reconcile his heart to the attainment of its fondest desires.

And still at times his spirit is heavy laden ; still through rouge, and bismuth, and pearl powder, old age *will* peer out at him from the face of his betrothed, and turn his heart cold.

" You really grow more and more foolish every day you live, my dear Roger," Rose will remark, prettily conscious of her own charms as she meets

his gaze. "What can it be, I wonder, that makes you look at me as you do?"

"The years of our separation, my love," is invariably Roger's answer. "I have to make up now, remember, for the dozen years during which I never saw your face."

And Rose, promptly satisfied by any appeal to vanity, asks no more.





CHAPTER V.

COMPLIMENTS, NOT CARESSES.

BELINDA'S eyes have met Roger's, and, in spite of all her foregone jealous resolves, the girl finds it hard to steel herself against Rosie's future husband. Never in her whole vagabond, loveless life has such honest human sunshine shone on her as shines now in Roger Temple's smile.

"I don't know about falling in love, but I am sure Belinda and I mean to be friends, Rosie," he says, advancing. "Do we not, my dear?"

And before she can find time to put herself on guard, Captain Temple's bronzed moustache has touched her cheek. It is the kind of salutation that could scarce, by the very iciest prude, be stigmatized as a kiss, and yet it bears a sufficiently marked family resemblance to one to be unpleasant in Rosie's sight.

"I, I really, Roger—Belinda looks so ridiculously younger than she is!"

"Not a bit," cries Roger, and now he rests his hand kindly on the little girl's shoulder. "Belinda

is fifteen years old—you told me, did you not, that she was fifteen? Well, and she looks it. Don't mind Rosie, Belinda. Rosie turns rusty at the thought of having a grown-up daughter."

"I shall be seventeen the week after next," says Belinda, holding up her chin. "I don't know what people mean by taking me for a child. I have certainly seen enough of the world and its wickedness to make me *feel* old," she adds, with the accustomed hard little rebellious ring in her voice.

"Belinda will look different—I trust Belinda will look totally different when she is properly dressed," says the widow, glancing down at her own elegantly flowing draperies. "I must really have a serious talk with Miss Burke about these short skirts."

"Ah, but Miss Burke is not here to be talked with, Rosie," cries Belinda, bent, it would seem, on disclosing every obnoxious truth she can hit upon. "My natural guide and protector has been away in Spain a week or more, collecting facts for her book, and I am knocking about alone, as you see—me and my dog Costa."

"Alone!" stammers Rose, shocked not so much, perhaps, at the fact itself, as at having the fact exposed before Roger. "You don't mean actually alone, my dear?"

"Well, no; I have my chums, of course, the fellows who were with me in the street when you arrived. Now, Rose," she goes on, pitilessly, "tell the truth! Were you or were you not ashamed when you first saw me?"

"I—I was surprised, Belinda," says Rose, in her sweetest little feminine treble. "It is not usual in England, you know, to see a girl of seventeen wearing her dress above her ankles. And then those fearful—what must I call them, Belinda?—what do they call those fearful door-mat things you have on your feet?"

They call those fearful things *alpargetas* in Spanish, *espadrilles* in French," answers Belinda, coolly holding out a ragged sandalled foot for inspection. "If you played paume on the hot sand for hours together as I do, you would be glad to wear espadrilles, Rose; yes, or to go barefoot altogether, as I do oftener than not."

A blush of burning shame rises over the widow's face. She has made a good deal of small capital, one way or another, out of Belinda's high birth to Roger, who is somewhat unduly sensitive about his future wife's connections, generally. The Earl of Liskeard's granddaughter—so like the Vansitart family—without being regularly pretty, a great air of breeding, of distinction about our poor little Belinda, *et cetera*. And now to find her, what? Ragged, dirty, with the speech and manner (this is Rose's verdict, not mine) of a charity school child, and mentioning, actually mentioning before a gentleman, the indelicate word "barefoot."

"Our dear Belinda wants a year or two of sound English training," she remarks, in a tone that to Roger sounds dove-like, but that Belinda remembers and interprets only too well. "That is the worst of

continental education ! One has to sacrifice so many good solid English qualities for accomplishments. Still in these days a girl *must* be accomplished. A couple of years in a select English boarding-school will, I have no doubt, render Belinda all that our fondest wishes could desire."

Belinda, on the conclusion of this little tirade, looks hard into her stepmother's eyes for a moment or two ; then, shouldering her schistera, she moves across to the door.

"I must be off," turning and bestowing a nod full of caustic meaning on the lovers. "And unless you want me to join some gang of wandering gypsy players, as I have often thought of doing, you had better not talk about boarding-schools any more. My accomplishments, Captain Temple," looking with an air of mock modesty—"Rose talks of my accomplishments, for which the good solid English qualities have been sacrificed ! I will tell you what they are, and you shall say which I am best suited for—a booth in a Basque fair, or a select English boarding-school ! Paume playing—'tis the same game, Mr. Jones tells me, as your English fives—paume," checking off each accomplishment on her dark, slim fingers as she proceeds, "bolero dancing, a tolerable acquaintance with slang in four languages"—

"Belinda!"

"Oh ! let me finish the list, Rose ! Let me make the best of myself that I can in Captain Temple's eyes. Bolero-dancing, slang, paume—of each a little. Knowledge, learnt practically, of how to keep

myself and dog on twenty sous a day board-wages. And a taste for bull-fights so strong, oh ! so strong," this with unaffected enthusiasm, "that I would sooner go without meat for a fortnight and church for a year than miss the chance of going to one. For further particulars apply to Mr. Augustus Jones."

And so exit Belinda, whistling—yes, Rose, whistling ; keep from fainting if you can—as she goes.

"A quaint little original, our future daughter," says Roger, whose eyes have certainly opened wider during the conclusion of Belinda's tirade. "But a good-hearted child, I'll be bound. You must not be too hard on her, Rose."

"I hard !" sighs the widow, looking at him reproachfully. "When was I ever hard on any one ? If you knew, Roger—but of course men never understand these things—the trial that poor girl has always been ! I can assure you I look upon Belinda as a chastisement, sent to me for some wise purpose by Providence."

She seats herself on a sofa, discreetly away in the half light, and with an air of resignation takes out her pocket-handkerchief. "I have made sacrifices no real mother would have made for her—can I ever forget the *devoted, blind* attachment of her poor dear papa for me ? Sending her away, heaven knows at what expense, to the continent, and always writing that she should have the best of masters, and everything ; and now this is the result. How painfully plain she is."

"Plain ? No, Rosic, anything but plain. Belin-

da is just at that awkward age when one does not know what to make of girls, and her dress is not quite like other people's, is it ? But she has magnificent eyes, and a pretty hand."

"A pretty hand ! Belinda's hands pretty ! Why, they are enormous, six and three-quarters at least, two sizes bigger than mine, and as brown, but you think every one you see lovely, Roger," says Rose pettishly. "I declare one might just as well be ugly one's self. I have never heard you speak of any woman yet that you could not find something to admire in her."

"And all because of you, my dearest !" cries Captain Temple, with warmth. "When a man admires one woman supremely, can you not imagine that every other woman, yes, even the plainest, must possess something fair in his sight for her sake ?"

He comes across to her, stoops, and rests his hand on his betrothed's fair head. It is a favorite action of Roger's, and one that Rose would be exceedingly well pleased to see him abandon. Who can tell what horrible trick *postiche* or plait may not play one in some unguarded moment of more than common tenderness ?

"Oh, Roger, how can you ?" She shifts a little uneasily from his touch. "Really you get sillier and sillier every day." It is a fixed idea of the widow's that Roger Temple's feelings for her are precisely of the same irrepressible and rapturous nature as they were when he was a boy of nineteen—a happy, fixed idea, lightening Roger's courtship more than he wots

of. "Lucky, I am sure, that Belinda is gone. Do you know I was so afraid you would say or do something *embarrassing* before her! How do I look, Roger dear? Tired and hideous, don't I? Now I insist upon your telling me the truth."

How do I look, Roger dear? is the burden ever of their love scenes. Compliments, not caresses, are what Rose's heart of hearts yearns for; and Roger, after the past few weeks' apprenticeship, finds it no very difficult task to frame them. To have to pay compliments to the same woman during six or eight hours of every consecutive day, would, in most cases, be a tolerably severe strain on a man's imaginative faculty. Rose, who is absolutely without imagination herself, requires the exercise of none in others. A parrot gets no more wearied with its own eternal "Pretty Poll," than does poor Rosie of the eternal, pointless, stereotyped commonplaces of flattery.

"You look charming, Rose. I never saw you look better. Your eyes are as bright—" Roger does not find a simile come readily to his hand, but Rose is content to take his good intentions on trust. "And your dress—all these lavender frills and this white lace! Rosie, how is it that you always manage to wear prettier dresses than any other woman in the world?"

He must have asked her the same question, on a moderate calculation, about two hundred times since they were first engaged. At this moment he knows how often he has asked it, and the precise fluttering of denial, and little bewitching, foolish laugh with

which Rosie will respond. And he sighs; if he had courage to relieve his soul in the way nature prompts, would yawn. Terrible point in a love affair when we have learned to disguise a yawn under a sigh; terrible point in a love affair when we have learned to disguise anything!

"I shall be quite unhappy about my dresses if they do not arrive soon," Rose goes on presently "Ten large cases, you remember." Does not Roger remember those awful ten cases well; in Paris, Bordeaux, everywhere? "And a bit of blue ribbon on each. There can be no mistake if the railway people are honest, but abroad one never knows. I'm sure nothing would have been easier than for Bellinda to run back to the station; still, she did not offer, and in my delicate position as a stepmother, I have never required the slightest attention from the poor girl. Oh, Roger," Rose's hand is in her lover's now; and he is beside her on the sofa, "if I dared, how much I should like to tell you a secret—something we are all concerned in!"

Roger's natural reply is, what should prevent her telling it? Ought there to be any secret, present or to come, between persons whose lives, like theirs, are to be spent in one long, delightful confidence? "Well, then—I'm a very naughty girl, I know," Rose avows kittenishly, "and I dare say you will scold me sadly, but I've been match-making! It is not quite by accident that Mr. Augustus Jones is in St. Jean de Luz!"

"Accident or no accident, the fact is a deuced

unpleasant one," remarks Captain Temple. "How or why Mr. Jones came here is Mr. Jones's own concern, but the bore of having to encounter him! I really did hope, Rose, that we had seen the last of that atrocious man when we left London!"

"You are prejudiced against him, sir. I'm afraid you don't like poor Augustus because he was a little too attentive to me."

"Rose!"

"Oh, come, Roger, I know what your ruling passion is, and always has been. The green-eyed monster, sir—"

"Rosie, I swear—"

"Well, we cannot help these things, my dear; I am ridiculously without jealousy myself. Poor Major O'Shea often said he wished he could see me a little *more* jealous, but I can make every allowance for it in others. I ought, I am sure," adds Rose, with a reminiscent sigh. "I ought to be able to bear all the jealous suspiciousness of men's natures after the experience I have had!"

There is silence for a minute, and any one watching Roger Temple's face attentively might discern there a good deal the look of a man who is trying to repress his weariness under the perpetual, exacting babble of a child. "I don't think you judge of me quite correctly, Rose," he remarks after a time. "Who ever judges another correctly? Who can read but by his own light? We were talking of Mr. Jones, were we not? Ah, yes, and you think me jealous of Jones! So be it my dear. Poor little

Rosie," he bends forward and salutes the widow's cheek—very tenderly, I may almost say fearfully. Roger is better acquainted with feminine weakness, as regards rice powder especially, than he was on that first fatal night at Brompton. "And now what about this grand secret of yours? You have been match-making, have you? I hope you don't mean to marry our little daughter Belinda to Mr. Augustus Jones?"

"He would be an extremely nice husband for her, from a worldly point of view," says Rose, turning over and over the diamond, a gift of Roger's that rests on her plump third finger. "And as to education—old Mr. Jones was sensible of his own deficiencies, and had his son coached up by the most expensive tutors. Any one hearing Augustus talk would say that he was quite well educated enough—for a married man."

"And presentable enough, refined enough? The sort of husband a girl could not only love, but be proud of? Well, Rosie, manage it as you choose. If you like Mr. Jones, and if Belinda likes Mr. Jones, you may be sure that I shall not forbid the banns."

"Ah, there is the difficulty. Belinda does not like Mr. Jones. Belinda and I never liked the same thing or person yet." Poor Rosie, if the mantle of prophecy could but fall upon her shoulders at this moment! "But you could help me so much, dear, if you would—and you will, I know?" upraising her eyes coaxingly to her lover's. "You will help me in my plans for Belinda's happiness? It was all

through me, Roger—don't be cross with me if I confess the truth—it was all through me that Mr. Jones came to St. Jean de Luz.

"Through you that Mr. Jones came to St. Jean de Luz! And why should I be cross with you, you little goose?"

Rosie talks like a girl of sixteen: Roger treats her like a girl of sixteen—yet is sensible, mournfully sensible, ever, of the grotesqueness of so doing.

"You see, I knew that Augustus was anxious to marry. I suspected, feared," says Rose, with modest grace, "that his hopes *in some directions* might have been just a little blighted, and the thought struck me—as he was going abroad and had asked me to plan his tour for him—the thought struck me to bring him and Belinda together. What he wants is connection, what she wants is money—"

"But Belinda is a child still," interrupts Roger Temple. "You are building all these castles in the air, dear, kind little soul that you are, Rosie, for her good, but the thing is ridiculous. Belinda's home must be with us for the next three or four years. Ample time, then, to begin match-making. How could a child of her age possibly decide," goes on honest Roger—"how could an innocent-hearted child of Belinda's age possibly decide whether she ought or ought not to sell herself for the so many thousands a year of a snob like Jones?"

"Roger, my dear," answers Rose in her sweetest, most angelic tones—whenever she is annoyed, Mrs. O'Shea's angelic proclivities become more marked;

"excuse me if I tell you that all those romantic ideas about 'selling one's self for money' are out of date. Belinda never was a child. Belinda has not one youthful sentiment belonging to her; and as to innocence, poor thing!—you heard what she said about bull-fights, without fainting! Those fine, interesting-looking fellows in such danger, and the horrid bulls goring everybody. I'm sure to see a picture, to read a description of one, is sickening enough."

"A matter of custom and nerve, Rosie. I have known some English women capable of worse cruelty than being present at a bull-fight."

"And the very best thing for the girl's safety and our peace of mind will be to get her respectably settled as quickly as possible. My own opinion of Belinda—I would say so to no one but you, Roger—is that she is without heart. And a woman without heart—"

But the generalization is opportunely cut short by the arrival of the boxes and blue ribbons. In her joy over her recovered finery, Rosie forgets all other human considerations; and her lover, with orders only to smoke one cigar, and to be back at the post of duty in an hour at latest, recovers a breathing space of liberty.



CHAPTER VI.

“MRS. GRUNDY, SIR!”



PINE-WOOD ballroom, wide open on three sides to the sea, an orchestra composed of harp and piano, a second smaller room for écarté and tresillio; such is the St. Jean de Luz Casino. Hither evening after evening resorts as motley a crowd as you will anywhere meet in your travels; the bluest blood of Castile side by side with Jew shopkeepers from Burgos, heads crowned and decrowned, wandering artists, respectabilities and other-respectabilities, all jostled together in the delightful republicanism of watering-place life. Hither, when the absence of Miss Burke gives her freedom by night as well as by day, comes Belinda.

Not within the precincts, sacred to payers, of the ballroom. A terrace of sand extends round the whole area of the building; and from this terrace Belinda, with other waifs and estrays like herself, is accustomed to watch the dancers, the dresses, the pretty women, the flirtations inside—I am afraid not without some occasional sharp pangs of envy at her heart.

Once, and once only, has the poor little girl been asked to dance. Maria José de Seballos, the beringed and bergamotted young Seville wine merchant, who, as we have seen, still holds a place in her dreams, did on one never-to-be-forgotten evening, the last before he left St. Jean de Luz, invite her for a waltz. And Belinda, in her shabby dress and espadrilles, was for the space of about eight minutes in paradise, whirling, blissfully whirling, among ladies in silks and flowers and jewels, the arm of the real grown-up partner supporting her, the whispers, sweet to vanity though redolent of garlic to the senses, of a real grown-up partner in her ear!

Such a stroke of fortune, she knows, is not likely to befall her again. Maria José talked nonsense to her in plenty (such nonsense as men of all nations do talk when they dance with unfledged girls), bade her remember him in her prayers till the day came when he should return and carry her away for good to Seville, and so on. But Maria José, let Belinda dream as she may, is gone forever. Mr. Jones, the only other young man she knows in the world, does not dance round dances, and certainly would not choose a partner in a black frock and frayed-out sandals if he did. Her lot in life is to look on—a wall-flower not yet seventeen—with pulses beating madly to the music, and nimble feet that will not hold themselves still, and eyes that say “Dance with me, dance with me,” to all the smart young gentlemen, as they lounge up and down the ball-room! Smart young gentlemen who, if they see Belinda at all, see

in her only an ugly child in pigtailed and a torn frock, and whose coldly indifferent glances her heart, older than her looks, is not slow to interpret.

She haunts the terrace, as is her wont, Costa at her heels, between nine and ten o'clock of the first evening of Rose's arrival. It is an unusually gay little ball at the Casino ; some near connection of ex-Spanish royalty present ; and the dancing-room is thronged. Swan-like throats and delicate complexions from Madrid, oriental eyes and Titian-like coloring from Seville, marble whiteness and chiselled Grecian features from Cadiz. Oh, what pretty women these Spaniards are, what a jest is life to them ! A song, a waltz, a flirtation in their earlier years, and then tre-sillio and prayers to the end. As responsible, examination-passing, degree-taking human creatures, women of Anglo-Saxon race have everything to be proud of, thankful for. But knowing nothing, like children, and like children enjoying everything, how thoroughly, unconsciously charming are these soft-faced women of the South !

They are in full dress, almost without exception, this evening. On occasion, when a Parisian woman of fashion will drape her meagre charms to the chin, a Spanish one will invariably appear bravely bare-shouldered. And this not in the ballroom or on the balcony only. Of a moonlight night, here in St. Jean de Luz, you will meet them by dozens, full dressed, yes, and in satin slippers, with flowers in their hair, calmly promenading along the streets or in the public gardens of the town. And what a be-

coming full dress it is ! The national veil and high comb, *a la manola*, which a short time back were things well-nigh of the past throughout the Peninsula, are the highest mode among the Spanish aristocracy to-day. So can the party whose motto is "*Fuera el extraniero*" mutely protest against the intruder now profaning the sacred throne of the Castiles. How fervently every painter must hope that no political revulsion will send graceful malcontents back to the trailing skirts and towering head-gear and ever-changing milliners' modes, each one more inartistic than the last, of Paris and London.

"They are not exactly bad-looking," says Rose, glancing about her coldly ; "not quite such an *orange* yellow as I expected. But their style is distressingly theatrical, is it not, Mr. Jones!" Rosie has come to the Casino ball well escorted ; Mr. Jones, who is also staying at the Hotel Isabella, on one side, hei legitimate slave—I mean her future lord and master—on the other. "Captain Temple," she runs on to Roger, "you say you think these creatures handsome ! How would you like to see any one you cared for, any English woman, dance in public with a bare neck and short skirt, as they do ?"

"The short skirts display admirable ankles, Rose," replies Roger. "Are introductions necessary in these parts of the world, I wonder? I should like to tempt my fate with that little blonde in pink satin, if I dared. Or will you waltz with me yourself, Rosie?" In a whisper this. "For the sake of old days, my love ! We have never waltzed together

since that night—you remember?—at the Hanover Square Rooms."

But Rosie, a good many years ago, gave up round dancing, finding that exercise, indeed, physically incompatible with the maintenance of a waist of twenty-two inches. She enforces her position now upon the very rigidest moral and æsthetic grounds.

"I never waltz, on principle, Roger. I do not approve of fast dances. I think it the worst possible taste for a woman who has experienced the serious sorrows of life to take part in such frivolity. But dance, pray, if you like. Think of your own amusement, not of mine. I understood that we came here to look on. But it does not matter. Nothing matters. Amuse yourself! I dare say Mr. Jones will not mind having to take care of me while you are away."

Tears are in Mrs. O'Shea's eyes, and Roger, of course, remains. It is no very great sacrifice for him to make. The little blonde in pink satin is distractingly pretty; she is glancing at him above her fan at this moment. But a man who has passed the dozen best years of his life in Madras can scarcely be enthusiastic about waltzing with the thermometer at ninety-eight. And it is better—a dozen times daily Roger tells himself this—better far to get broken thoroughly and at once to the bit which he has voluntarily taken between his teeth. A man choosing a bride of Rosie's age must learn to "look on" at most of life's amusements, and by her side. Poor

Rosie! Would the dear little woman be as dear, as lovable, as thoroughly a woman as she is, if she possessed strength of mind sufficient to be devoid of jealousy? Is he not only too lucky a fellow to have won her, charming feminine weaknesses and all, as his own?

The dear little woman, though she will not accord the objectionable pleasure of waltzing to her lover, sees no evil in an occasional mild flirtation or two on her own account. Augustus Jones is her devoted attendant. Augustus introduces ere long some other young Britons, much of his own stamp, picked up at the *table d'hôte* of the Hotel Isabella. Rose is "surrounded;" Frenchmen and Spaniards turning to look at the *passée* pretty English woman as she smiles and chirrups, and casts up her eyes with all the well-considered airs and graces of mature coquetry, at her loud-talking young compatriots.

Roger takes himself quietly off among the crowd. Waltz he will not, as Rosie on such high grounds disapproves of waltzing; but though his limbs be fettered, no embargo as yet is laid upon his eyesight. For a short time longer in this mortal life Roger Temple may at least admire. He comes across the blonde in pink satin, whose eyes and fan make play at him as only the eyes and fan of a Spanish woman can; comes across other blondes, other brunettes. Finally he reaches the end of the room that stands open to the seashore, goes outside for a breath of cooler air, probably not without dreams of a consola-

tory pipe under the starlight, and finds himself face to face with his future daughter.

"What, Belinda, my dear! Alone in the dark and no partner? Let me take you in to Rosie."

"Not if I know it, sir! I come here to watch the amusement of my betters, not to show myself. Think of Rose's face of horror if I walked across the ballroom to her like this!" holding out a fold of her ragged frock with a gesture in which there is to the full as much pride as humility.

"Rose is much too kind-hearted to take notice of your dress," says Roger. "All Rosie cares for is to see other people made happy."

"H'm. I see you are an excellent judge of character, Captain Temple!"

"And then she could introduce you to partners—I take it for granted you like dancing? Rosie has got hold of some young men from the hotel, who would, I am sure, be only too happy—"

"To take pity on my forlorn condition, if my mamma did her best to make them! Captain Temple, do you think seriously I would dance with any of those horrible English *snobs* Rose is talking to?"

"One of those horrible English snobs is the rich Mr. Jones," says Roger, stroking his moustache, and remembering the lesson in match-making he received before dinner from Rose. "I thought Mr. Jones was an admirer of yours, Belinda?" he adds, looking inquiringly into the girl's upturned face.

"An admirer—I suppose Rose told you that?

As if I went in for admirers—I! Do I look as if that kind of rubbish was in my line of life?"

Roger hesitates. His heart goes out toward this poor neglected child, with her tattered clothes and shaky morals, and sweet, imploring woman's eyes; but with the best will in the world he finds it difficult to be kind to her—every look, every tone, every smallest gesture of Belinda O'Shea's so utterly sets patronage or compassion at defiance.

"And Mr. Jones cannot dance round dances," she goes on presently; "they send the blood to his 'ead. Captain Temple," her voice softening in a moment, a wistful, pleading expression coming round her lips, "do round dances send the blood to your 'ead, I wonder?"

Roger has a flower in his button-hole, an oleander bud, abstracted for him by the fair fingers of his betrothed from one of the bouquets upon the dinner table. And as she speaks, Belinda, with all a child's ignorance of shame, removes this flower from its place, raises it an instant to her face, then fastens it in the waist belt of her own dress.

"Do round dances send the blood to your 'ead, Captain Temple? I *should* so like a waltz if you will have one with me!"

"If—why of course I will, my dear child! You should have asked me sooner. Hark, there is a waltz beginning now. We shall be just in time."

He forgets Rose and Rosie's strong opinion as to fast dancing, forgets that Belinda is still in the disgraceful frock and ill-matched stockings, forgets

everything but the child's wistful, pleading face! One waltz, poor little girl? Ay, and as many more as she chooses, thinks kind-hearted Roger. And takes her hand and leads her bravely within under the gas lights, and among the silks and satins—yes close to the owner of the pink satin and the fan, whose blue eyes glance at him no longer.

"I may as well take my hat off though," cries Belinda, preparing to start without loss of time "Hi! Costa boy, guard!"

She flings back her ragged hat to the old dog, who ever since Roger's appearance upon the scene has been watching matters suspiciously, and is now peering with jealous eyes round a corner of one of the doors. Then she puts her slim, sunburnt hand upon Captain Temple's arm.

"I asked you to dance just to try you," she whispers, when they have gone once or twice round the room. "I thought—yes, and I hoped—you would be too ashamed to be seen with me, and then I should have had a good excuse for hating you. But you were not. You are a better fellow at heart than I took you for, although you are—"

"Although I am—what, my dear?"

"I wish you would leave off calling me my dear, and—and I can never talk when I am dancing," says Belinda illogically.

"At all events you have not made up your mind to hate me yet?" whispers Roger in her ear.

Fate lands them, when the waltz is over, exactly opposite Rosie and her train of attendants. And

Roger Temple, for the first time certainly in his life, feels himself a coward. Something about the lips of the little pink and white woman who owns him makes him tremble; yes, tremble! Let men who are not lovers laugh, in the flippant levity of their souls, if they will!

"What a *wax* Rosie is in," says Belinda, who possesses to the full the cruel acumen of her age. "I remember that particular smile of hers so well. It always came before my worst whippings."

Roger is silent. That his Rose possesses some few thorns he knows; innocuous feminine prickles of jealousy, vanity, and the like. How if little tempers be added to the list? The little tempers of an exacting woman of forty. But no, not even in imagination will Roger's chivalrous heart go within a hundred miles of that obnoxious numeral!

He shifts the subject, and puts off the lecture that he knows to be in store for him by proposing that they shall go outside again. "Does Belinda mind the smell of a pipe? If not—"

"Mind!" the girl interrupts him. "Now, just once and for all, Captain Temple, understand this—Belinda minds nothing! What do you pay for tobacco in England? Sixteen shillings, twenty francs, a pound? Well, the next time I go to Truro, if I can only run the custom-house, I shall bring you back some real Spanish in my pocket. Cheating the government? Oh, we don't trouble our heads about governments in this country. We smuggle whatever we can, and are thankful. You save one franc

fifty on the pound of tobacco, and get a better weed, sir, into the bargain."

They go outside, where Costa, bearing the hat between his teeth, joins them: he lays it down at the feet of his little mistress, and with a low, half-impatient, half-loving bark, thrusts his nose beneath her hand for a caress.

"This is the best friend I have on earth, Captain Temple. He would pull you down—oh, as soon as look at you, if I held up my finger. Would you not, Costa?"

Costa, at this appeal, moves stealthily round to Roger Temple and criticises his heels dog fashion.

"Here, poor fellow, here, Costa!" says Roger, holding out his hand.

And, wonder of wonders to Belinda, Costa crouches, fawns, licks it. Evidently, whether she likes her father's successor or not—and she is doing her best, yes, did her best, throughout every moment of the waltz, to detest him—Costa means to accept Roger Temple as a friend.

She calls the dog off instantly. "I did not think you would fawn on new-comers, Costa—down with you, down! I want none of your hypocritical attentions. You are the first of my stepmamma's favorites I have ever known Costa speak to, sir. You should see his delicious hatred of Burke and Mr. Jones."

"Ah, dogs understand some matters better than we understand them, Belinda. Costa has seen too

much of life to put all men in the same category, as you do."

They saunter forth into the night, side by side; this southern night which is but a whiter, more voluptuous day, balmy as an English summer noon—air so clearly lustrous that every remotest object on sea and land stands out, as though 'twere chiselled in silver, against the profound purple of the sky.

Roger Temple lights his pipe and begins—a little way Roger has in most feminine's society—to feel his heart grow soft. Belinda whistles.

"Will you take my arm, my dear? I beg your pardon, I must try not to disobey orders again, but you see I cannot help forestalling events, somewhat."

"Forestalling—what do you mean by forestalling?" says Belinda, turning on him sharply. "At what time pray of my life, or your life, or anybody's life, are Captain Temple and Belinda O'Shea going to be so wonderfully affectionate to each other, so wonderfully familiar?"

"Well, I should hope when they live under the same roof together," answers Roger kindly. "Before very long, yes, before many more weeks are past, you must know that I look forward to your staying with us for good, Belinda. You have had quite enough, I think, I—I mean Rosie thinks—of Miss Burke's protection. Surely you will allow me to speak to you as I should to my own little daughter then?"

"Your daughter! I am nobody's daughter!" she cries quickly. "I hate the sound of the word.

I hate step-relationships. There was a time, once—but now I have no one on the face of the earth I love—I want no one! And as to living with you and Rose—I prefer knocking about the world with Burke, by long odds thank you. We are ‘Miss Burke’ and ‘Miss O’Shea’ always. We don’t like each other, and we *don’t pretend we do!* We are not any kind of relations, or step-relations, heaven be thanked !”

The bitterness, the suppressed passion of her childish voice, do but soften Roger’s heart toward her more and more. “Allow me to offer you my arm, Miss O’Shea, will you ?”

“No, I thank you, Captain Temple. I find it quite hot enough walking alone. We are not used to such fine manners, are we, Costa, in our class of life ?

“ Pour toute la nature
Quand boire à tant d’appas ?
Pourquoi la créature
Ne boirait-elle pas ?
Buvons, chantons, et fetons tour à tour,
Et l’ivresse, l’ivresse, l’ivresse et l’amour.”

Belinda sings out these delightful optimist sentiments at the very top of her voice; then races away with Costa along the sandy slopes. When Roger catches her up, a hundred yards or so further on, all the gravity of her mood has melted into the wildest spirits.

“It was good fun, that waltz we had, down at the Casino, Roger—if you call me ‘my dear,’ why should I not call you Roger, ‘steppapa Roger?’ I enjoyed it all the more because I knew how my es-

pargottes and my stockings and everything about me riled Rosie ! But for real dancing—bah ! if you want to see that, you should come with me to the Place Ithurbida and see how the peasant girls dance the bolero. It is not the third of a kilo away, I can hear the tambourines from this, and I'll promise to bring you back, safe and sound, Roger, and Rosie is so happy with her young men ! ”

She pleads to him, the soft night shining on her lips and eyes, and for the first time it occurs to Roger Temple that this wild little Arab child will be a pretty girl some day.

“ Take me where you will, Belinda. I do not believe in you overmuch, but I will believe in Costa. I am sure Costa would not stand quietly by and see me murdered.”

“ Ah, that shows how much you know Costa. Did I not say you were a good judge of character ? However, you need not be afraid. If I owed my enemy a grudge—mind, I only say ‘if’”—but even as she qualifies her speech thus, malice indescribable lurks in her voice—“ if I owed my worst enemy a grudge, I would sooner let him live his fate out than put an end to his sufferings quickly ! However, these are affairs of Spain, Roger, not of yours or mine. How sentimentally you gaze at everything ! ” He is gazing, if the truth be told, at her face. “ You think this a most romantic spot where you are standing, no doubt ? ”

The spot *is* romantic in its own rugged way, and seen by this starlight, which flatters old nature as a

court portrait-painter flatters women's faces. A broad Salvator-Rosa-looking sierra of arid turf, dotted here and there by a low white cross or stunted cypress, and with the dead unbroken blue of the Atlantic for background.

" You are standing over one great vault, sir. St. Jean de Luz is healthy to a proverb, the Basque people say—except when we get the pestilence ! Unfortunately we get the pestilence pretty often, and then we have to be buried, not by ones and twos, but dozens, just wherever our friends can find room to dig trenches. I shall bring Rose and Mr. Jones up here some fine evening, make them sit down on one of these dear little mounds, and go into dear little raptures about the beauties of the climate and the scenery, and then inform them that they are sitting on dead men's bones. Bones ?—whole skeletons, by scores ! Only yesterday I saw the children playing 'fossette,' I don't know how you say it in English, into a skull."

" And so, naturally, the place is a favorite haunt of yours," remarks Roger. " Just the kind of taste I should have expected from a person of your grave and melancholy character."

" I would sooner keep company with skulls than fools, any day," retorts the girl, with a shrug of her shoulders. " Perhaps in years to come, when you have had as much experience of—of different varieties of intellect as I have, you will come to the same opinion."

She leads the way down a rough bullock-track or

gully, that diverges at this point from the shore, and a few minutes' walking brings them out upon the main road ; ere railroads were, the world's highway to Spain, but seldom traversed now save by outlying bands of Carlists, or by the baggage mules and ox drays of the country people. Straight before them are the mountains, transparent wondrous violet in the shadows, faint alabaster (for the moon will be here anon) along the crests. The river, the lights of the town gleam beneath. From the Place Ithurbida, a thicket of olives and cork-trees close at hand, rise sounds of music ; barbaric, blood-stirring dance-music, about as much like the threadbare Parisian tinkle-tinkle of the Casino waltzes as the smell of the moorlands in September is like a barber's shop.

"Now you shall see dancing in earnest," says Belinda, arching her slender arms *cachuca* fashion above her head, and her whole lithe figure seeming to become instinct on the moment with life and music. "Tra, la la la la, lira, la lira, lira!"

The orchestra is composed of a Basque tambo-
rine and bagpipe, both instruments played by one
old woman in rags ; with castanet accompaniment,
ad libitum, from the fingers of the performers. The
corps de ballet consists of three couples of men and
girls, all of the lowest order of the people, not a shoe
or stocking among them, but "artistes," every one,
if originality and fire, joined to the most perfect
power of expression, the most finished neatness in
execution, may be said to constitute art. These
Basques dance as they smuggle, drink, gamble, with

passion. Money-seeking as the French, pleasure-loving as the Spaniards, every hour of these people's vivid lives, they *live*. Imagine northern peasants, for pleasure, after a summer day's toil, dancing cachucas and fandangos till midnight!

Belinda, at Roger's side, remains a silent spectator throughout one dance. With the first notes of the next her feet begin to twinkle.

"This is the Basque bolero, the national dance," she whispers to him; "but there are none of the best dancers here to-night. You should see the Gitanas who come down from the hill country at fair-time, or"—little witch, as if the thought had suddenly struck her! as if it were not expressly for this that she had lured him hither!—"or you should see me. Will you see me dance a bolero, Captain Temple?"

"Some time or another, my dear child. Some evening at Rosie's hotel, when—"

"Now, this moment, out-of-doors, to real Basque music, or never! What, do you think I would dance a bolero *on a floor*, with Rose shaking her head and describing how nicely the young ladies used to turn their toes out at Miss Ingram's? I dance for you, sir, now or never! If you are shocked, you know you can easily walk off in another direction and pretend you don't belong to me."

Her slight little form trips away into an open space between the trees, six or eight yards distant from the principal performers; and there, partnerless, unashamed as was ever court duchess during

the stately performance of a minuet, the Earl of Lisk-eard's granddaughter dances her bolero. All the originality of gesture, the supple strength, the staying power of the peasants Belinda possesses to the full; but she possesses something more, poor child! —the graces born of mind as well as matter, the delicate exquisite alternations of fire and languor which are the very poetry of true dancing—and of whose seductive charm she is only too profoundly ignorant!

Roger watches her with pleasure as regards the gratification of his artistic sense, and at the same time with curiously poignant pain. He has lived too long in India not to be reminded of Nautch girls and their performances by this kind of exhibition; and Rosie's animadversions on the subject of Belinda return, with unpleasant clearness, to his mind. The peasants, with the perfect natural breeding that characterizes their race, take no further notice of the child than by a smile or a nod as they pass her in the evolutions of the dance. When it is over they seat themselves on the turf, the girls together, the men a little apart, and all begin chatting in that liquid bastard Sanscrit of theirs which of itself is music. Belinda trips gayly back to Roger's side.

"I dance tolerably well—I dance better than any of those fine die away Hermiones and Dolores at the Casino, don't I?" she exclaims, holding up her eager face within about a foot of Roger's in the moonlight.

The bolero has lent new animation to Belinda's expressive features. Her deep Irish eyes are all aglow; her parted lips tremble. Roger Temple discovers that there are materials not only for a pretty, but for a very pretty girl in his future step-daughter, and can by no means bring himself up to the sternly virtuous spirit of admonition which would befit the occasion.

"You dance a vast deal too well, Belinda—too well for the present company, I mean."

"Ah, those are your English prejudices—Mrs. Grundy, sir! I heard the same story from poor Mr. Jones this morning. My 'company,' as you call it, is every bit as good as that mob of Madrid shopkeepers we danced among at the Casino. Don't you know that the Basques are a people of nobles? Why, the very beggars wear their rags with an air that makes you feel the vulgarity of soap and water; and as to the bullock-drivers—there is not one of them but has a pedigree—so long! and who feels, yes, and looks noble, every inch of him."

"Then let the Basque nobles dance boleros by themselves," says Roger. "I am of a jealous disposition, child. It does not please me that your pretty dances and your pretty self should be at the mercy of every stranger who may happen to pass along a public roadway."

Up leaps the blood into her brown cheeks. The reproof, if reproof it be, savors of a tenderness to which she has been so long unused, a tenderness that sinks with such dangerous sweetness on her heart.

"Do I dance prettily?" Her eyes for the first time fall beneath his; she trifles, a little abashed, with the pomegranate bud in her waist-belt. "I made you come here because—oh, because I wanted to shock you, as I shock Mr. Jones and Rose. But do I really dance prettily—better than the peasant girls?"

"So much better, Belinda, that I should like to bid you never dance another bolero or cachuca while you live."

"She stands a moment irresolute, then turns from him without a word. Vanity, childish triumph, and a burning, perfectly new sense of womanly shame are holding the oddest conflict imaginable in Belinda's heart, and keep her dumb.

"If I had only the right to exact a promise of you," goes on Roger, possessing himself, as he speaks, of her hand, and pressing it with kindly warmth.

"But you have not the right; no, not as much as Augustus Jones has!" she exclaims, snatching her hand away abruptly and bursting into a peal of laughter. "Augustus *might* have bought me, perhaps, with a franc's worth of maccaroons: but you—you! Reserve your jealousy, Captain Temple, for the time when Rose takes to dancing boleros with the peasants! And as for me—

"—Buvous, chantons,
Et fêtons, tour à tour,
Et l'ivresse, l'ivresse,
L'ivresse, et l'amour."

She sings the bacchanal chorus with greater spirit

than ever ; then, pirouetting the step of the bolero as she goes, disappears among the olives, nor joins Captain Temple again until he is within a dozen paces of the Casino.

Mrs. O'Shea, star-gazing on the terrace with Augustus, receives them with honeyed smiles. Admiration acts upon Rosie's moral faculties like wine; and she has really been a good deal admired this evening—or a good deal stared at, which comes to very much the same thing. When one reaches a certain age, is it not wisest to accept "attention" just as one receives it, without criticising its quality too closely ?

"Oh, you naughty, naughty children !" She nestles her hand at once under Roger's arm, nor takes it away again. "We have been looking for you everywhere. What a *nice* waltz you had ! I was *so* glad to see Captain Temple dancing with you, Belinda ! But I am afraid you found those sandal-things *dreadfully* inconvenient to dance in, dear ?"

The italics, the plentiful notes of admiration, convey venom, trebly distilled, to Belinda's sensitive ear. Roger hears only the soft veiled voice, feels only the plump pressure of his beloved one's hand upon his arm ; and he "blesses her unaware." Dear, gentle, timid Rose ! How sweet these womanly women are, even if a trifle silly. The pungent piquancy of a little semi-barbarian like Belinda may be tasteful, as sherry and bitters are tasteful, on occasion. But for honest every-day consumption, morning, noon and night, what can be compared to the wholesomeness

of table beer—table beer with only just the least little suspicion of a tendency to turn sour!

“This is really not half a bad sort of view,” says Augustus, pulling at his wristbands with the self-consciousness of a man who wants to be unconcerned, and addressing the Alantic. “On the right we have the ruins of St. Barbe, still bearing marks of the English guns of ‘thirteen, on the left the coast of Spain, while closer at hand—”

“Rises the gloomy church-tower of St. Jean de Luz,” cries Belinda, imitating the poor wretch’s pedantic company-voice to admiration. “That sacred edifice in which Louis XIV. was formally betrothed to Maria Theresa, Infanta of Spain, in the year of our Lord sixteen hundred and sixty. How long will it be, Mr. Jones, before your great book of travels is published? ’Twould be a pity, upon my word, that so much valuable research should be wasted!”

“Belinda—Belinda, my dear, how can you!” says Rose admonishingly. “Mr. Jones, why do you let her? I am sure it is all most interesting. Poor dear Louis XIV. and Marie Antoinette—we read the Peninsular War straight through at Miss Ingram’s. But Belinda is such a quiz! Really it seems like something in a novel—doesn’t it, Roger—to be so near Spain?”

This is literally Rose’s conversational style reduced to orthography: style that one may call the absolute, perfected vacuity of human speech; but yet that, lisped by a pretty woman, now making play with her eyes, now suffering giggling eclipses behind

her pocket-handkerchief, now pressing her fingers confidentially on your arm, is not without its charm to the superior intellect of man.

Roger replies, "Yes indeed, Rosie," a safe unmeaning answer that he keeps always ready for the foolish little babble of his beloved one. Augustus, who, like other unhappy young men of his class, regards silence as a lapse of breeding, once more starts a subject. How many persons would Captain Temple suppose, now, this Casino might be capable of holding? He suspects that Roger dislikes him; he knows that he detests Roger; and shifts from one leg to another, and fidgets at his glove button (Augustus Jones wears yellow gloves at these Casino balls) as he addresses him.

"How many people? Really, Mr. Jones, I have not the very smallest notion." Capital fellow though Roger be to those who know him and whom he likes, I feel that when he addresses men like Mr. Jones I cannot altogether clear him from the imputation of "shutting his eyes as he talks!" "Kind of thing I never guessed in my life. Belinda, can you tell Mr. Jones how many people the St. Jean de Luz Casino holds?"

"Of course I cannot," answers Belinda, with her crushing brusquerie. "Who in their senses would ask such a question unless they were collecting materials for a guide-book? Now if you wanted to know about the people themselves, I might enlighten you."

"Enlighten us by all means," says Roger Temple.

And he moves, despite a slight unwillingness in Rosie's fingers, nearer to the girl's side. "Begin with the little lady in pink satin. There she is opposite, looking over her fan at the gentleman with the ferocious moustache. Do you know anything about her?"

"Anything? I should just say I did. And about the man with the moustache too! Why those are the people from Burgos, who—"

And then, such a story as Rosie, straight-laced, over-scrupulous Rosie, is forced to listen to! Such a story—succeeded by such a dozen others! Constantly frequenting the society of gamins younger than herself, Belinda has picked up all the watering-place wickedness afloat, simply as a gamin picks up wickedness, and details it without a blush.

And she tells her stories well; dramatizing a scene in Spanish here, throwing in some caustic bit of mimicry there, keeping her characters vivid and living before her audience, always.

"We have had enough, more than enough scandal," cries Rose at last. "You have quite taken my breath away, Belinda. These may be the moralities of foreign watering-places, the subjects of foreign conversation, but they are not *English*. I declare, when we were girls we did not know the meaning of evil!"

"How hard of comprehension you must have been, my dear," observes Belinda cheerfully. "I suppose that was in the innocent days when you first met Captain Temple?"

The taunt makes Roger himself wince. The innocent days when he first whispered his passion to old Shelmadeane's young wife beside the hippopotamus!

"You are severe this evening, Belinda," he remarks coldly. "You make no distinction between friend and foe. Rose, my dear," bending over the widow and whispering—yet not so low but that Belinda's ear can catch every lover-like syllable—"is it not late for you to be out, after all the fatigues of your journey? Let me take you back to the hotel, dearest. You look pale."

"Oh, but Belinda," says Rose generously, and making a feint of quitting her lover's arm. "Don't anybody think of me! See Belinda home first."

"Thanks, very much, Rose," cries the girl. "As Belinda has been seeing myself home (only she never had a home) during the last four years, she will probably be quite capable of doing the same to-night."

• "If—if I may be allowed?" And Mr. Jones puts himself forward in obedience to a glance he received from Rose. "It is too late for Miss O'Shea to pass through the town without an escort."

"Miss O'Shea has got Costa for her escort," begins Belinda with her usual sturdy independence; then abruptly she discovers that Roger Temple is watching her face, and a new freak of perversity takes possession of her. "Miss O'Shea has got Costa, but she will be only too glad of *your* protection, now and at all times, Mr. Jones!"—smiling affectionately

at Jones with her lips, and mocking him, ridiculing him, despising him with her eyes.

"You will see if that is not a match," remarks Rose, as the two figures walk away together in the moonlight. "I was so much obliged to you, my dear, for taking her off my hands this evening. It gave me such a nice long talk with Mr. Jones, and I am convinced he is *serious*. What is more, Roger, in spite of all her flighty manner, I am convinced that Belinda will accept him; indeed, my only fear is that he will be shocked by her over-readiness. A young girl telling an eligible man that she would be glad 'now and at all times' of his protection!"

"Recollect her age, Rose. You must not take, *au pied de la lettre*, every word that a madcap child like Belinda chooses to utter."

"I take people's speeches and their actions, too, as I find them," answers Rose, ignoring the quotation; Rosie ignores everything in the universe that she does not understand. "And I do not forget that Belinda is of Vansittart blood. Like mother, like daughter." Proud though she is of the connection, Cornelius O'Shea's widow can never refrain from flinging her little pebble at poor dead Lady Elizabeth's memory. "We all know what kind of reputation the Vansittart women have."

"The reputation of more than common beauty, I have been told," remarks Roger, with an air of innocence.

"She has taken his arm--actually! When we were girls such a thing was never thought of until

one was formally engaged. Belinda has taken Mr. Jones's arm—do you see?"

"Yes, I see, I see!" answers Roger Temple, not without impatience. Curious anomaly—if anything pertaining to the relations of men and women can ever be called anomalous!—Rosie's lover is sensible of a distinct pang of jealousy at this moment. "Any girl of seventeen would encourage any fellow who had carriages and diamonds to offer her, as you ought to know, Rose."

"Belinda, most of all," acquiesces the widow, with one of her pretty sighs. "It has gone out of fashion for young girls to sacrifice interest to the affections, as we used."

Roger thinks of Mr. Shelmadeane, and is silent.





CHAPTER VII.

MAMMON WINS HIS WAY.

HITE with moonlight, astir with the life and joyousness of the southern night, are the narrow streets of St. Jean de Luz, as Belinda and her companion proceed toward what may by courtesy be called Belinda's home. Ladies with fan and mantilla returning bare-headed from the Casino ball; itinerant serenaders twanging guitars for money—alas, is there to be no poetry left in life!—beneath the projecting iron balconies; stately hidalgos in cloaks; statelier beggars in tatters; every here and there a *patio*, or garden, odorous with citron flowers, pomegranate, myrtle; and for background the mountains, just one shade deeper iris than the arch of tremulous heaven overhead.

Could hour or scene be more auspicious for a lover? Could hour or scene better dispose a girl's imagination toward a declaration of love?

They walk for a considerable time in silence, Belinda and Mr. Jones. At last, "I hope you have forgiven me for not feeding Costa on maccaroons?"

whispers the young man, pressing her unresponsive hand ever so little to his side.

"Do you, Mr. Jones? why?" She accepts his arm out of sheerest perversity, and because she guessed that certain eyes were watching her; but her heart feels wicked against poor Augustus, wicked against the whole bright world which forms a background for Roger Temple and for Rose. "When *I* know people detest me, I would much rather be without their forgiveness than with it."

Not an encouraging answer for a man on the eve of proposing. But Mrs. O'Shea's wary arts during that starlit conversation on the terrace have brought up Mr. Jones's resolution to the sticking point. So much familiar talk of Lady Althea and Lord Lionel. "Belinda's nearest relations, Mr. Jones—the people, whenever our dear Belinda does settle in London, with whom she and her husband must be constantly *and intimately thrown*"—so much familiar talk, I say, about possible cousins in the peerage, not unmixed with suggestions that, in our dear Belinda's position, a happy early union rather than large settlements is what Rose's step-maternal heart yearns after, has made Mr. Jones resolute to win or give up all to-night.

He does not love, he sees no remotest chance of bringing himself to love this meagre, dark-skinned, bitter-tongued mite of an earl's granddaughter. But Jones is not a man to be turned from any project, commercial or matrimonial, by obstacle so paltry as personal likes or dislikes. The earliest sacred truth

instilled into his childish soul, his highest mature conception of moral law, is that Christians and Englishmen should buy in the cheapest market whatever article they require. He, Jones, requires the article birth ; has hunted it up and down many English watering-places, as men of the Cornelius O'Shea genus hunt money ; and now has it under his hand, to be bought for a song (did not Rosie wisely throw in the hint about modest settlements ?), the only difficulty being as to the article's consent. But after sunning himself in the widow's smile, and listening to the widow's silky flatteries during the past hour and a half, Mr. Jones cannot but feel that he is a very captivating fellow indeed in women's eyes, and entertains but little fear as to that.

"I have never been fortunate enough to find you at home yet, Miss O'Shea." He makes this next attempt at tender talk just as they reach the Maison Lohobiague, on the third floor of which Miss Burke and Belinda lodge. "I should like," sentimentally, "to see the apartment where you spend your time, if I might ?"

It seems to him that the task of bringing her to terms will be easier of accomplishment indoors than out. Never yet has he seen Belinda within four walls, and the idea strikes him that she may prove more manageable within a restricted space; like a squirrel in a cage, a colt within a pound, or any other inferior animal whom it is man's supreme pleasure to tame and subjugate.

"The apartment where I spend my time. Burke's

den! Well, if you want to see it, you had better use your legs and walk up now. Miss Burke, as you know, is away; our servant—actually we have a servant, Mr. Jones, just to set our soup going of a morning—went off to the bull-fight at Fontarabia yesterday, and has not appeared since. So you must not expect to see things in apple-pie order."

She quits his arm, bestows a series of hugs and farewells on Costa—the poor old dog, well trained, stopping discreetly three or four paces away from Miss Burke's threshold—then vanishes out of sight beneath an overhanging stone *portecochère* or archway, whither Mr. Jones, his dapper feet tortured by the stones, his yellow-kidded hands extended to save his nose from collision with the wall, follows her.

The Maison Lohobiague is one of those towering fifteenth-century Basque palaces of which three or four still stand, fast crumbling, alas! into dust, beside the harbor of St. Jean de Luz. The Infanta of Spain lodged in the Lohobiague, says oral history, on the occasion of her betrothal to Louis XIV. Now 'tis tenanted out in sets of furnished lodgings, low-rented, on account of rats, dry rot, mould, and other such drawbacks to mediæval romance, but deliciously cool in summer by reason of the narrow, semi-Moorish windows, thick walls, and vaulted balconies, and with the noblest panorama of river, fertile plain, and distant lonely mountain sierra for outlook.

The dark, winding staircase seems trebly dark after the intense moonlight of the streets; and Mr.

Jones, a careful man not only as regards moral but bodily risks, pauses at the bottom.

"Come along, if you are coming," rings out Belinda's voice from airy heights overhead. "There is plenty of light when once you get up here, only look out after your shins meanwhile."

The "plenty of light" proceeds from a solitary oil lamp, which sheds its dim religious rays before the figure of a saint on the landing of the second floor. A grotesquely tawdry female saint, of Basque or Spanish origin, life-sized, ghastly-hued; with a lace pocket handkerchief, with blood streaming from her martyred brow and hands, a necklace of huge mock brilliants on the throat, a pair of satin slippers that may have been white once—say at the betrothal of Louis XIV.—upon her feet.

"We live one story higher still," says Belinda, Mr. Jones stopping to turn up his British nose at this work of sacerdotal art. "And unless Juanita happens to have left a candle, I shall have to entertain you in the dark. However, there is the moon."

"And—and the brightness of your eyes, Belinda!" says Jones, groping his way up the steep staircase after her.

"And what?" shouts the girl sharply, through the darkness. "There is such an echo, Mr. Jones—no hearing a word, unless you speak more distinctly. What did you say would light us?"

But something, either in the tone of her voice or in the distance that separates them, restrains Mr.

Jones from again launching into the hazardous region of compliment.

Under the lawful *régime* of Miss Burke the outer door of the apartment is always kept virtuously locked after dark ; but this, like other precautionary rules of life, is set at naught when Belinda, as at present, holds the rudder of government. Half ajar stands a huge oaken door, blackened with time, crusted with dirt, a door as old, probably, as the solid masonry of the house. On a vigorous push from the girl's hand, it creaks slowly back upon its hinges, and Mr. Jones is introduced to "Burke's den," a room bigger than an Isle of Wight church, the roof joisted and innocent of all modern refinement of lath and plaster, the walls of the indescribable smoky grey of ages. Vast pictures of saints and martyrs in different stages of burning or mutilation, French studies, probably after Ribera, exaggerations, nightmares of that master's most repulsive realism, hang around. Saints and cobwebs may, indeed, be said to furnish the room. Of furniture proper there is—a table that was once carved and gilt, now in the last stage of rickety decay, and of which one leg is propped up by a pile of battered books ; a lofty pier glass, overdim with antiquity for purposes of reflection ; three crippled chairs, piled pell-mell at the present moment in a corner : and a shelf containing in all about twelve pieces of crockery, of different sizes and patterns. "I am an Ishmaelite by choice," Miss Burke will say, with the conscious proud humility of intellect, to such straggling acquaintance as chance ever gives her

to entertain. "The frivolous details of upholstery do not concern me. Climate, nature; association with the mighty minds of the past—*these* to me are the necessities of life?"

Mr. Jones looks round him open-mouthed, Belinda having been fortunate enough to find a candle whose solitary light barely pierces from end to end of the sombre, shadowy room.

"And you—you live here?" he exclaims with unaffected amazement. "What a place—what pictures! It gives one the horrors to look at them." Only Mr. Jones is thinking a little nervously over what he is going to say next, and calls it "'orrors."

"Well, yes—the Maison Lohobiague is not furnished according to Clapham taste," retorts Belinda, with her frank impertinence. "But it suits me better. I like the old shabby room, Mr. Jones, and the 'orrid pictures and the cobwebs; yes, and I should be very sorry to exchange them for any stuccoed cockney gentility. I have lived here two years off and on; Miss Burke has made it a sort of headquarters in all her comings and goings; and I have grown to the place. If Burke would only get killed on a railway or made a professoress, or anything, I should be quite content to stop in the Lohobiague with Costa, always!"

And now Augustus feels is the time for him to crash down on this poor pauper ch ld with the magnificence of his offer. "Miss O'Shea—Belinda," he cries, coming up beside her very close, "there is no necessity for you to spend your days in these miser-

able foreign places any longer. Since I saw you this afternoon I—ahem—I have been talking to your mamma."

"Stepmainma. If you are not accurate, you are nothing."

"And I have made my mind up! I have made my mind up fully," says Jones, with magnanimity, "as to my line of conduct. There may seem, there *are* disparities." He glances with an air of condescension at the girl's dress, at the appointments of the meagre room. "Still, as Mrs. O'Shea says, six months of the first educational advantages in England would work wonders, and, at our age, we can afford to wait, can we not?"

"I should answer better if I had a glimmering notion of what you mean by 'we.' Are you going to school again, Mr. Jones? Mind your 'h's,' you know, if you do."

"Belinda," his voice shakes, his color rises. (How hideous he is, communes Belinda within herself! How the mosquito-bites glow and radiate from out that purple blush!) "Do you think you ever—I mean, I know I never—" confound it all, why will the girl fix those hard eyes of hers upon his face!—"never saw any one so likely to make me happy. Oh, come, you mustn't take your hand away—" which she does, with unmistakable energy, the moment she feels his touch. "I will not let you go till you answer me. Belinda, could you ever care for me enough to be my wife?"

He has stumbled through it as well, perhaps, as

the majority of men stumble through the most momentous question of their lives. Belinda, who has never before heard a declaration, or read of a declaration, or imagined a declaration, thinks the exhibition pitiable, and tells him so.

"You are a more complete fool than I took you for, Mr. Jones. If you really want me, *me*, to marry you, why not say so like a rational being, instead of stammering and hesitating and blushing like a schoolboy ashamed to speak the truth?"

Mr. Jones stands silently recovering his nerve after the plunge. "It will, I know, meet the wishes of Mrs. O'Shea and of Captain Temple," he remarks at last, almost humbly.

"What will?"

"Our marriage, Belinda."

"Did they tell you so?"

"Mrs. O'Shea led me to believe—"

"Rose leads everybody to believe everything. And he—Captain Temple?"

"It can be no interest of Captain Temple's to put himself in the way of your settlement, I should say."

She turns from him, she walks quickly to the further end of the room; a certain dignity, child though she be, in every movement of her poor little ragged figure. Then she comes back to the young man's side and looks steadily with her honest eyes into his.

"A thing like this can't be decided in a moment, Mr. Jones. If you want really and truly, to marry

me, you must, I suppose, have some good reasons for doing so. That is not my business, however. Every one is free to have his own crotchetts about happiness! But what I do want to know, and what I dare say you can tell me, is—why should I marry you?"

"I should hope, a little because you like me," suggests Augustus, trying with imperfect success to throw a lover-like warmth into his voice. "That is the reason generally, I believe, for which young ladies accept men."

"Is it, indeed? I thought liking had nothing whatever to do with such things. I thought the lover said, 'I can afford such a house, carriage, servants, diamonds, on condition that you take me for a husband!' And then that the young lady reckoned up the sweets and the sour together, and answered yes or no, according to whether she found the bargain good."

"Is that the kind of way you wish me to address you, Miss O'Shea?"

"It is the best way for you to address me if you want to get a sensible answer, Mr. Jones."

She perches herself on a corner of the rickety table, tilts her hat back on her head, and swinging her sandalled feet to and fro in the air, begins—as coolly as though she were scoring up the points at paume—to reckon the items of the projected "bargain."

"Carriage, so much; diamonds, so much; house, so much. We will begin with the house. How

large a house, exactly, should you and I have to live in at Clapham?"

"I am not joking, and you are," replied Jones sullenly. "Of course, if you do not choose to take the thing seriously, I have nothing more to say."

"Well—would you mind my having my supper first? I am as hungry as a wolf, sir! Burke leaves me on a kind of board-wages when she goes off literaturing, and I have not eaten a mouthful since your maccaroons. You will not mind? Thanks. And while I eat, you know, you can make yourself agreeable, tell me all the delightful projects you and Rosie have been laying out for my future welfare."

Belinda's supper consists of a big slice of household bread, and another rather bigger one of melon, washed down by cold water. Having produced these refreshments from the shelf, which at once answers as dresser, larder, and pantry, she resumes her former place on the corner of the table, and, unincumbered by knife, fork, or plate, sups.

Mr. Jones, who, like other unwholesome-blooded city-bred persons, distrusts all wholesome, natural, simple food, watches her with a kind of pitying horror. Melon, at night! cold water! brown bread, devoured in half-pound slices!

"Yes, my living does not cost much," cries Belinda, interpreting his looks correctly. "That will be one blessing, at least, for my husband. And if he liked to pitch his tent further south, it would cost less. Talk of a Clapham villa! Why, you need not have a house at all for more than three months in

the year down at Granada, there are such lots of jolly arches and walls to sleep under. And the wine of the country, fine strong wine, that gets in your head directly, is as cheap as water, and you can buy a day's fruit for five *gramos*. I should say," meditatively, "a married pair of quiet habits and unambitious minds could live handsomely in Granada on twenty-five francs a week ; yes, and be able to treat themselves to a theatre or bull-fight of a Sunday as well."

"Twenty-five francs a week ! Fifty pounds a year!" says Augustus. "Not the quarter of what I should allow *my* wife for pin-money."

A sharply-contrasted picture they make at this moment, reader—these two people who are discussing the propriety of spending their lives together: Belinda, with her mischievous, Murillo eyes and gleaming teeth, devouring melon and swinging her ragged feet to and fro as she philosophizes on the nothingness of wealth ; Mr. Jones, yellow-gloved, London-coated, and with his smug, calculating, Leadenhall-street face, watching her.

He is cleverish, worldly-cleverish, at least ; the sons of most very successful men are that ; but he has not a chance against the gamin astuteness, the keen mother wit of Belinda O'Shea. Devouring her bread and melon, rattling on with wild panegyrics of the delights of beggary, she sets herself to find out from him the precise extent of Rosie's little intrigues on her behalf, the precise goodness of the "bargain" offered to her acceptance, and succeeds ; yes, even as

regards details. Such a carriage, such liveries ; such a set of diamonds as her wedding-gift. Rose, to the utmost of her power, has sold her, and sold her advantageously ; Captain Temple—well, Captain Temple, a not unwilling witness to the transaction.

Now for her reply.

“I cannot imagine what put it into your head to think of me, Mr. Jones. Oh, I know why you came to St. Jean de Luz; of course Rosie planned your tour for you ! But what first put it into your head to think of me in that sort of light ?” For a moment her long eyelashes shade her cheek, the cheek that neither pales nor reddens under his gaze. “I have not made myself over-and-above civil to you, have I ?”

“Well, no, not anything very particular,” Mr. Jones assents.

“And I am sure I am not what you, with your fastidious tastes, would think lady-like”—oh ! the curl, imperceptible perhaps to Augustus, of her upper lip !—“nor what any one,” with a thoroughly sincere sigh this, “would think pretty. Now what in the name of heaven can make you wish to marry me ?”

“I—I—because I love you,” begins Jones, stammering.

“Tell that *blague* to some one else,” interrupts the girl with sudden passion, “not to me ! If you loved me, I should feel it—*here !*” clasping her graceful brown hands to her breast, “just as I feel that Costa loves me, and I would marry you—yes,

even you—to-morrow out of gratitude, and if you had only a hundred a year instead of all the thousands you talk of. But you do not. You care no more for me than I for you, and so—”

“ And so I suppose you will not marry me,” says Jones, with mortification that he would fain hide under an air of banter.

Belinda hesitates—looks away from him. She is a child, with all a child’s instinctive craving for the sweets of liberty; but she is a Bohemian as well, with all a Bohemian’s keen appreciation of money and what money will bring. It would—it would be sweet, she feels, to wear finer dresses, richer jewels than Rosie’s, to invite Rosie and Captain Temple condescendingly to dinner, lend them one’s opera box, take them for a drive occasionally in one’s carriage. And then to bid good-by forever to Miss Burke! The thought of Augustus Jones as a life-companion may be hideous, but half its hideousness vanishes, surely if one remembers this—he would replace Miss Burke.

“ I am certain I shall make you wretched, Mr. Jones; but as you seem, you and Rosie, to have set your minds on this engagement—stop, though, I must ask one thing first: is your name on the door-plate, I mean of the Clapham villa? That I could not stand.”

“ My name—*on a door-plate?* ” says Jones, as indignantly as though the blood of all the Howards ran in his veins. “ Why, what do you take me for? No one but professional men, apothecaries, or that

sort of thing, ever ticket their names outside on a door plate."

"Well, then, I could never suit you nor you me, the whole thing is preposterous; still, if you would like to try it, just as an experiment—"

He rushes forward rapturously.

"Oh, I thank you—very much obliged indeed!" Belinda springs upon her feet and puts herself in a not altogether unscientific attitude of self-defence. "We may be engaged if you like, but I will have no fooleries of that kind. Do you hear me—I will not! Mr. Jones, you shall never kiss me."

And then, quick as thought itself, flashes on her the remembrance of the moment when her eyes first met Roger's this afternoon, of the hour spent with Roger alone under the stars, of the moment when he praised her—ah, with praise how unlike the fulsome compliments of this legitimate lover!—and when vanity, shame, a minglement of feelings such as her life had never known before, held her dumb.

"Never kiss you! Not even when we are married, I suppose?" remarks Mr. Jones, unwisely jocular.

"Married—who talks of being married?" cries Belinda; such mutiny against her own weakness, such disdain, such mockery of her captor in her eyes!

"You talked a moment ago about trying the experiment, did you not?"

"I said that we might try being lovers—no, not lovers either—that we might try being engaged; and

I keep to it. You are going away to visit the Pas de Roland, you know, to-morrow—”

“Not now. I shall have no spare time for sightseeing now,” interrupts Augustus amatively.

“Why not? Because Rose is here? Oh, Rose has quite enough on her hands without you. You will go to the mountains to-morrow, and you will stay away four days, as you intended, and admire every waterfall and rock and ruin Murray bids you. By that time I shall be used to the thought of—of Clapham, perhaps. Miss Burke will be back for one thing, and I shall have had a good deal,” with a sigh this, “of Rose. I shall feel better disposed toward any change. Mr. Jones, if you will promise never, as long as you live, to kiss me, I dare say I shall not be very sorry to see you come back.”

And not one other warmer word or promise can Augustus wring from her. She will try being engaged, minus love-making, as an experiment; and if he will promise never as long as he lives to kiss her, perhaps after four days’ absence she may not be very sorry to see him return.

So much for his present chance of an alliance with the noble family of Vansittart.

As Mr. Jones walks back to the Hotel Isabella in the moonlight, he does not feel sure that he will have bought the article birth quite so cheaply after all.



CHAPTER VIII.

VANITY VERSUS CONSCIENCE.

MRS. AUGUSTUS JONES. Belinda Jones. Mr. and Mrs. Jones, Clapham.

So Belinda, when she is alone, rings every possible change upon her future titles as a matron, and finds each tuneless. But then the diamonds! reflection that ere this has governed the conduct of so many a wiser, older, better woman. Belinda's life of late years has not brought her into personal contact with many of the outward belongings of wealth. One tremendously showy and massive brilliant was wont to sparkle in Major O'Shea's necktie, but that, likelier than not, thinks the girl with a sigh, was paste. Papa used to say, when he was in a moralizing mood, that everything was paste in this degenerate nineteenth century. "There has been a bronze age, my child, and an iron age," Cornelius would tell her. "This is the age of paste. And, in the long run, the counterfeit answers just as well as the reality." If paste diamonds, in the long run, would answer as well as real ones, why become

the wife of Mr. Jones and live at Clapham for the sake of them? Ah, but there are the riding horses as well—the riding horses, the silk dresses, the opera box.

Wistfully gazing through the open window at the sky, Belinda thinks of the remote Belgravian days when her papa was in the first delightful flush of Rose's money,—the days of dinner parties and balls, when even she, Belinda, wore pretty frocks, and occasionally tasted the society of lovely, bare-necked beings, with flowers in their hair, silken trains, fans, lovers, instead of watching them forlornly from without, as she did to-night. How would *she* look bare-necked, with flowers in her hair, with a train, a fan, lovers? How if she should attempt a rehearsal of the effect (lovers excepted) with such rough materials as she may have at hand!

Miss Burke, as it chances, has left the key of her travelling-case in the lock—alas, the frame of mind for wrong-doing given, and when does the demon opportunity fail any of us?—and in Miss Burke's travelling-case lies, neatly folded, that lady's best black silk dress. In shorter time than it has taken me to write, Belinda, candle in hand, glides into the adjoining room, the sanctuary of Miss Burke's maiden charms, opens the case, gazes, vacillates—handles!

The skirt is too long, for Miss Burke is of loftier stature than herself. So much the grander will be her train. And the sleeves must be tucked up, and the bodice pinned down, and white lace, also of Miss

Burke's, added here and there, for lightness. Never in her life before has Belinda touched thread or needle save under stress of direst necessity. But with the very first awakening of love in a young girl's heart awaken the instincts of millinery. She collects together such dislocated sewing implements as the household can boast, with absorbed interest stitches down a fold here, puckers up a plait there; finally skips lightly out of her own dingy Cinderella frock, and a minute later stands radiant, in the majesty of rustling silk, short sleeves, bare throat, and train—a young lady.

She is not an ugly girl, after all. So much the tarnished glass upon Miss Burke's dressing-table assures her promptly. Her neck and shoulders look lily fair, compared to the sun tan of her face; her arms are delicately fashioned and tolerably plump for seventeen. But the pig-tails! She snatches off the hideous frayed-out green ribbons, unplaits them, and behold! the ill-kempt, neglected hair falls round her slender figure in waves of silky chestnut. A pair of gloves of Miss Burke's supplies an impromptu cushion, over which she coifs it high above her forehead, as the little Spanish blonde in pink (the blonde Roger Temple admired) was coiffed to-night. A scarlet passion-flower, wet with dew from the balcony, finishes the picture.

Not ugly? Why, she is pretty already—a year or two hence will be admirably so, prettier than was even Rose in her prime, thinks Belinda, gazing at her own transfigured self in a kind of rapture. The

only thing she lacks now is jewelry—ear-rings, bracelets, a necklace for her throat: the Jones diamonds, in short. Pending the possessing of these, could no substitute be found to give one some imperfect foreshadowing of their splendor?

To the female conscience, once fairly deadened by vanity, all successive downward steps come easily enough. If a necklace be wanting, a necklace must be got: honestly, if one can, but *got!*

On the landing of the second floor stands, as we know, the life-sized figure of a saint; martyred, satin-slipped, glittering with gorgeous paste adornments. If the good old Beata would only lend that necklace of hers for half an hour, ten minutes, long enough to yield one some faint foretaste of the sweets of brilliants! If—assuming her permission—one were to borrow it, say! The glass case can be opened by a cunning hand from the back: this fact Belinda discovered when the first floor lodger presented the saint with a new lace handkerchief at Easter. And no living soul is about; and it could not surely be much of a sin, considering that the saint is but a big wax doll with bead eyes—and indeed if it were a sin, is it not all-important, Mr. Jones and his suit impending, for Belinda to ascertain, practically, whether diamonds are becoming to the complex o.1, and so worth the sacrifice of a life or not?

She creeps down the echoing stone stairs, her heart beating, her unaccustomed feet entangling themselves at every movement in her trailing skirts; she reaches the landing of the second floor. There

stands the Beata, her livid hands crossed on her breast, her bead eyes awfully wide open. There are the paste brilliants. A straggling moonbeam rests on them: they glitter with a deathly, horrible fascination. Belinda's heart and courage wax chill.

Suppose the outraged saint should come some night, and, standing beside her bed, lay an icy, retributive hand upon her face? To meddle with these holy persons' beads, for aught she knows, may be the most mortal of crimes; and—"crime, or no crime, *I will do it!*" decides the girl with the spasmodic coward's courage of her sex. Now, may fortune be her friend: may no inmate of the house pass from floor to floor while the sacrilegious act is being carried into effect.

The cranky fastening of the glass door gives a groan as she opens it, causing Belinda's guilty conscience to quake again; but no ear save her own hears the sound. She unclasps the necklace, shivering as her fingers come in contact with the clammy wax throat; then bears away her booty, her legs trembling under her at every step up stairs. She takes it to the light of her solitary candle; admires its mock effulgence; clasps it, trembling, around her little warm, soft neck; surveys herself on tiptoe in the tarnished mirror above the chimney-piece; and where is conscience now, where remorse? Admirable monitors of men the moment possession has brought satiety, why is it that conscience and remorse hold their peace as long as the taste of the apple continues sweet between our teeth?

She surveys herself, well nigh awe-stricken by her own fairness. She feels that to be the possessor of real diamonds she would cheerfully become Mrs. Augustus Jones and start for Clapham to-morrow. Now, nothing is wanting but a fan and lovers. The fan can be had; a huge gilt-and-black structure of the date of thirty years ago, which lies for ornament on the mantel-shelf: and of this Belinda possesses herself. But the lovers? Bah, some unimportant details are sure to be wanting at every rehearsal! When the prologue is over, the play played out in earnest, the lovers, it may be supposed, will come of themselves.

She struts up and down the room, her train outstretched, her fan in motion, her eyes glancing complacently at the *mignon* little figure the glass gives her duskily back. "If Captain Temple could see me—if Captain Temple could see me now!" thinks vanity. "If he knew I could be anything but ragged, and hideous, and a gamin. And if he did know this, what would Captain Temple care?" says another sterner voice than that of vanity. "Of what account is the whole world to him by the side of Rose, and Rose's beauty?"

A sudden leaden weight sinks dead on Belinda's heart. She is nothing to Roger Temple; holds no more place in his present than in his future. She seems to stifle. The saint's paste diamonds must surely be too heavy, so painful is the choking feeling in her throat. Turning abruptly away from the sight of her finery and of herself, she extinguishes

the candle; then goes out, bare-armed, bare-necked, in her diamond necklace and train, upon the balcony.

It is now past midnight, and something like cooler air begins to stir across the sleeping country. Balmy sweet is the air; every floor of the vast old house has its balcony, every balcony its flowers; the sky is all a-quiver with stars; mountains, river, plains, are lying in one great hush of purple sleep. Belinda rests her arm against the iron balustrade, and, gazing away westward toward the rugged line of Spanish coast, muses.

Spain or Clapham?

She has learned much since she asked herself the same question this afternoon; unknowingly has passed the traditional brook, perhaps, where womanhood and childhood meet; for very certain has accepted Mr. Jones, elected in cold blood for Clapham—Clapham, respectability, riches. And yet—and yet, if Maria José (or some one else) were to appear before her just now, and—

Click, click! goes the sharp sound of a vesuvian close, as it seems, beside Belinda's ear. She turns with a start, and there, on the adjoining balcony, *on robe de chambre*, and placidly lighting his midnight pipe of peace, stands Roger Temple. Roger may breakfast with Rose, dine with Rose, walk with Rose, spend any number of hours during the day that he chooses alone with Rose; but it would be the acme of indiscretion for him to lodge under the same roof with her. Thus the widow well versed in the minutiae of surface morals, decides. And so—from

Scylla to Charybdis—fate, and the landlord of the Hotel Isabella together, have contrived to lodge him under the same roof with Belinda. The Maison Lohobiague has two flights of stairs, in these modern times has indeed been converted into two distinct houses, one of which is rented by the people of the Isabella as a *succursale*, or wing for overflowing guests, during the bathing season.

Belinda sees him, grasps the whole dramatic capabilities of the situation in a moment, but gives no sign. I have said that nature has endowed the child with abundant imitative talent; every-day association with the Basques, the most excitement-seeking, play-loving people in Europe, has stimulated the talent into a kind of passion. Now, she feels, is a magnificent opportunity for her to act—and with a purpose! A glance at Roger Temple's face convinces her that he does not recognize Rose's vagrant, out-at-elbows stepdaughter under the disguise of civilization. Now she will have a rare opportunity of arriving at a truth or two; now may she even test the practical worth of a "lifelong fidelity," see if this devoted lover cannot be led into a passing flirtation—moonlight, loneliness, the certainty of the crime remaining undetected, favoring.

With an unconsciousness the most perfect she resumes her former attitude, and after a minute or two of silence sings, in that undertone for which we have no word in English, the whisper of singing, a stanza of the mendicant student serenade, familiar from one end of the Peninsula to the other:

Desde que soy estudiante,
Desde que llevo manteo,
No he comido mas que sopas
Con suelas de zapatero.

She has a sweet, a sympathetic voice—*in posse*, like the beauty of her face ; and melody and voice alike harmonize deliciously with every external accessory of the scene.

“ Brava, brava ! ” exclaims Roger, when she has finished. “ That first verse was so excellently sung that it makes me eager for the second.”

Belinda, thus unceremoniously accosted, turns upon him in all the conscious virtue of a trained dress and paste necklace.

“ Señor ! ” she exclaims, holding her head up with dignity, and in such a position that the moon shines upon its soft young outline full.

“ I beg a thousand pardons,” says Roger, putting his pipe hastily out of sight. “ But the señora’s song was so charming that I forgot that we had no master of the ceremonies to introduce us. Has it not a second verse ? ”

“ My song has a second and a third verse,” replies Belinda, in English, strongly flavored with Castilian gutturals. “ I must acquaint his lordship, however, that I believed myself to be alone. I never sing for the pleasure of strangers except when I am on the stage.”

“ The stage ! ” repeats Roger Temple, scrutinizing the girlish face and figure critically. “ Why, is it possible ? ”

"I have acted as long as I can remember," says Belinda, with all the effrontery conceivable. "If his English excellency has travelled through any of the principal Spanish towns, he must have heard me."

"When the señora favors me with her name I shall be able to question my memory more accurately," answers Roger.

Belinda pauses for a minute or two; then, "My name on the stage is Lagrimas," she tells him, "or, as you would say it in English, 'Tears.' Doleful, is it not; but I do not wish it changed? Who would not sooner be called tears than laughter?"

She sighs, and, half turning from him, rests her cheek down upon the graceful bare arms that lie folded on the balcony. Seen thus in the moonlight, her bright hair falling around her shoulders, her childish face grown pensive, she seems to Roger as fair a little creature as ever blessed man's vision in this prosaic world; and his pulse quickens. The balconies are distant about four or five feet from each other. Leaning across the giddy intervening space, two persons of steady nerves might easily clasp hands, or at least touch fingers, if they so minded. They are alone together, he and this girl, absolutely alone, as were the first pair of lovers in Eden; and yet impassably divided, as their lives are destined in very fact to be forevermore. And Roger's pulse quickens.

During a great many years in India, I believe firmly (without endorsing Rosie's sentimentalities in general) that the image of his first love did blind

Roger Temple to most other women's attractions. But that was during the lifetime of the successive husbands, his rivals; while his passion remained hopeless, theoretic, intangible. Free, he continued faithful; bound—well, we will not say that his fidelity for a moment runs any serious danger, but he is undeniably more open to alien impressions than he used to be in his Indian days. Every man living, above the level of the savage, has a craving after contrast, as strong pretty nearly as the mere physical one for food and drink. In India, Rose Sheldma-deane, the modest, flower-faced Rose of his imagination, *was* his contrast, the delightful ideal reverse to all the women he lived among. Now, alas! now, every woman who is fresh and natural, who does not wear pearl powder, does not demand tawdry compliments as a right, possesses for Roger Temple all the fatal charm of antithesis!

"Your philosophy is beyond your years, señora. Surely nothing should seem so good as laughter in one's youth."

"Youth!" echoes Belinda, raising her head quickly, and forgetting the Spanish accent and her assumed character together. "What have I to do with youth, sir? When was I young? Why, from the time I was thirteen—"

And there her eyes meet Roger's full, full in the moonlight. She stops, and droops her face, crimsoning.

"Plenty of hard training has come to me in my life, señor," she goes on after a space, but without

lifting her eyes again to his. "Sometimes I feel, a little too keenly, how well my name Lagrimas fits me. But why should I talk of such things to-night ! You know my country, Spain ?" turning to him with the most irresistible of all coquetry, the coquetry of ignorance. "No ? Well, you should run down there some day, now that you are so near. I will be your guide if you choose."

"Done," says Roger gayly. "It is a bargain that we take a Spanish tour together, Señora Lagrimas, is it not ?"

"I don't think I said anything about 'together,' did I ? But never mind about that. Yes, we can go down to Granada first, if you like. It will take us about a week to see the Alhambra, and then—But is his Excellency quite sure," pointedly, "that his time is his own, that his friends will give him leave of absence ?"

"Oh, no question of that," says Roger, with the airy assurance of an unfettered man. "The doubt is rather, will the Señora Lagrimas keep her promise ?"

No question of that ! Ready, after three minutes' temptation, to be led captive by the first strolling actress who accosts him from a balcony ! So much for engaged men, thinks Belinda. So much for the romance of two young hearts, the fidelity of a lifetime, etc. Let us try this devoted lover of Rose's a little further.

"I mentioned your friends, señor, because I know that you are not alone here. You may not have

noticed me, but I certainly saw you to-night at the Casino with ladies."

Roger Temple looks the very picture of innocence. "At the Casino?" he repeats. "With ladies? Ah, to be sure, I believe I did speak to some English acquaintances of mine for a few minutes."

"There was an ugly little girl for one; a girl very sunburnt, very ill-dressed; you danced a waltz with her, and another lady not so young. Your mamma, probably, señor?"

"Stepmamma," assents Roger unblushingly, "and the stepmamma also of the little sunburnt girl with whom I danced."

"Consequently you and the girl are—are—"

"Ah, that is a knotty point, the precise relationship between that young lady and myself. I will not allow you to call her ugly though, Señora Lagrimas. Sunburnt she is; ill-dressed she may be; ugly never."

"Well, for my part, I do not see a good feature in the young person's face," says "Lagrimas," with a contemptuous shrug of her shoulders. "A skin like a gypsy's, a wide mouth, a low forehead!"

"Magnificent eyes and eyelashes, teeth like ivory, graceful little hands and feet, and the sweetest smile, when she chooses to smile, in the world."

"I should think her a vile temper, judging by her expression; and as to her manners! I have been here some time, señor. I know the girl by sight, and by reputation. She plays boys' games

with boys; robs henroosts after dusk, with that dog of hers; she talks—swears, some people will tell you —like a gamin of the streets, and—”

“ And for each and all of these small oddities I like her the better,” interrupts Roger warmly. “ Belinda is just the kind of girl to grow into the most charming of women, in time.”

“ A charming woman! After the pattern of the other lady who is not so young, the stepmamma?”

“ No, not after that pattern precisely, señora. Your vast experience must have taught you, surely, that there are more kinds of charming women in the world than one. Belinda has been neg—allowed to run a little too wild, hitherto; but circumstances, I am happy to say, will place her under my guidance now.”

“ Will they, will they indeed, Captain Temple!” interpolates Belinda mentally. “ We shall see more about that by and by!”

“ She will live in my house, will stand to me in the position of a daughter, and I mean to reform her.”

“ Ah, heavens, how praiseworthy! How Christian! Reform Belinda? With the aid of a prim English governess and a staff of attendant pastors and masters, of course?”

“ Well, no,” answers Roger. “ I have no great belief in prim English governesses, neither are pastors or masters very much more to my taste. I shall reform Belinda, as much as she needs reforming, by

kindness alone. It strikes me that what the poor little girl wants is not sternness, but love."

Belinda turns her head away with a jerk; her throat swells, the big tears rise in her eyes. If he had said anything but this, if he had called her ugly, wicked, any hard name he chose, she could have borne it better!

"Belinda should be extremely grateful for your—your pity!" she remarks, as soon as she can command her voice enough to speak. "For my part, I don't in the least value that kind of regard."

"No? And what kind of regard do you value, may I ask?" says Roger Temple, his tone softening.

"Ah—what kind? when I have known you a little longer than ten minutes I will tell you."

"The day we visit the Alhambra together, for instance?"

"Perhaps. Meantime, in Belinda's name, I thank you a thousand times for the *pity* you are charitable enough to bestow upon her! Good-night, señor. I leave you to think over your fine projects of reformation alone."

And with a mocking reverence "Lagrimas" salutes him; then, assuming the air of a princess at least, and with a grand sweep of her rustling silken train, leaves the balcony.

She quits him, I say, with the air of a princess; the moment she is out of sight, turns, peeps through a rent in the dilapidated Venetian blind, listens with eager, breathless curiosity to find out what Roger Temple will do next.

Captain Temple for a minute or two keeps silence. Then "Señora, Señora Lagrimas," he cries softly.

But no answer comes to his appeal.

"Only one word—do you live here? Is there any chance of my seeing you again to-morrow night?"

Belinda is mute as fate.

"I shall listen for your voice toward eleven o'clock. If you do not take pity on me, I shall remain out here all night, remember, heart-broken."

"So much for engaged men, I say," thinks Belinda. "Oh, if I was really wicked—if I was half as bad as they give me credit for—could we not have a comedy in earnest out of all this?"

She retreats toward the middle of the room, and, under her voice, sings another verse of the serenade:

Es tanta la hambre que tengo,
Que ahora mismo me comiera
Los bierros de ese balcón,
Y el cuerpo de mi morena!

Then she steals back to the window to listen; her heart beating till she can hear its beats, her very finger-tips tingling with excitement, so carried away is she by this rôle of temptress that she is playing—the most fascinating rôle (save one, perhaps) of the whole little repertory of woman's life!

"The balconies are not very far apart, señora," remarks Roger presently. "It would be quite possible for a desperate man to leap from one to the other."

A half-suppressed malicious laugh is the señora's only reply to this thrilling suggestion.

"I shall certainly make the attempt before long, and if I fail, mind—if I fall, and am stifled down in all that harbor mud below, my death"—plaintively—"will be upon your conscience."

A laugh, rather more malicious, rather louder than before, is her reply.

"Señora Lagrimas! for the last time, will you or will you not come out and speak to me?"

And once more Belinda's silence says "No."

"I give you three chances, Señora Lagrimas."

Silence.

"Lagrimas!"

Silence.

"Belinda, my dear!"

She flashes out upon him like a storm-wind; her lips apart, her eyes gleaming, so that they eclipse the saint's diamonds on her throat.

"You—you dare to say you recognized me all the time?" This she asks him as soon as her indignation gives her breath to speak.

"I recognized you all the time," Roger confesses humbly. "I knew you when I was lighting my pipe; I believe, before you saw me at all. Why in the world should I not recognize you, my dear child?"

"Because I had been fool enough to disguise myself under this rubbish." With a fierce little gesture she apostrophizes Miss Burke's fine silk. "Because—oh, if I had known, if I could have

guessed that you, of all people, would see me! And the nonsense you talked, sir; the nonsense you dared to talk, knowing it to be me!"

"We have been talking very pleasantly," answers Roger Temple. "I cannot say I remember talking any particular nonsense."

"What, not when you told me to my face that circumstances had put me under your guidance, that you meant to reform me? *You* to reform *me*!"

"It was a rash speech, I admit. I am not so sure that it was nonsense."

"And then our tour in Spain—but you shall keep to that, you shall keep to that, Captain Temple! Whatever Rose says, and whether the scheme is up to the Miss Ingram standard of propriety or beneath it, I mean to hold you to your word. We are going to spend a week in Granada together, you and I."

"Of course; Rosie with us. What could be pleasanter? Rosie with us, and—"

"And Augustus Jones, too, if you please," interrupts Belinda, a curiously abrupt transition in her voice. "In the selfishness of your own happiness, you and Rose, you seem entirely to forget other people's. I go nowhere without Augustus, now."

"Without Augustus," repeats Roger blankly. "Why, Belinda, is it possible—can you mean—"

"I mean that I will go nowhere without Mr. Jones. Now come, Captain Temple, or, as we are discussing family matters, let me call you by a sweeter future name—come now, steppapa, don't pretend! No concealment between near and dear

relatives. As if you and Rosie did not know everything about my poor Augustus just as well as I do!"

"I should be very sorry to know one thing," says Roger, culpably negligent of his future match-making duties as a parent. "I should be very sorry to know that you cared seriously, young, ignorant of life as you are, for a person like—Jones!"

It seemed as though the obnoxious monosyllable would nearly choke him.

"Care! And, pray, who said anything about caring, sir? I am going to *marry* Mr. Jones—we settled the whole affair to-night—marry, not care for him."

Marry, not care for him. As much repulsion as a man can feel, theoretically, toward a distractingly pretty little girl, not five feet distant from him in the moonlight, Roger feels at this moment toward Belinda O'Shea. Rose was right. The Vansittart blood runs in her veins, poor child, and the blood is bad! Scarce seventeen yet and she has the cold, mercenary instincts of a woman of thirty, and not by any means a good woman of thirty, either!

"You are slow with your congratulations—and the match is really a desirable one, steppapa; not of course, for a moment, speaking of Augustus personally. Bran-new villar at Clapham—if he does leave out a few of his h's, poor fellow, he makes up amply for them with his r's—villar at Clapham, opera box, diamonds. My appearance is greatly improved by diamonds, is it not?" Holding up a pendant of the saint's necklace between her fingers.

"Certainly. What lily is not improved by a little paint? All that glittering finery is Mr. Jones's first offering, I presume."

"No," answers Belinda calmly. "There has not been time, I am sorry to say, for offerings yet. He walked home with me after I left you and Rose at the Casino (poor Augustus felt, as I did, that our company was not wanted), and I invited him in, just to keep me company while I ate my supper. And he proposed."

"He proposed. And you—"

"Accepted him, steppapa—what else should I do? And then, when I was alone again, the thought struck me of borrowing Burke's Sunday silk, just to see how I liked the taste of fine clothes; and I stole this necklace, sir, from the throat of old Beata who lives on our second landing—a paste necklace only, not real diamonds such as I shall have when I am Mrs. Augustus Jones! Was it wicked, I wonder?" sudden compunction for the sacrilege she has committed coming back upon her. "Captain Temple, do you think now the blessed old saints, when they are once safe in heaven, ever trouble themselves about the jewels they have left behind them on earth?"

Roger is silent. Belinda's worldliness has repulsed him to such a degree that he can no longer smile at her rattling talk; and still she fascinates him more and more. Girlish she is not: deliberately, in cold blood, has she not sold herself to a man she despises, openly glorying in the bargain? Feminine

she is not: right well can he imagine those eyes of hers flashing, those lips quivering with the fierce excitement of a bull-fight. Innocent she is not: witness the stories she told them at the Casino, the gusto with which, ten minutes ago, she sustained her part of Lagrimas! And still, devoid though she be of every virtue that can be catalogued, there is in her a charm more potent than all the cardinal virtues put together. Some few exceptional people exist in this world who are a law unto themselves; people endowed with that rarest of gifts, the fine flavor of perfect originality, and whose qualities are not to be measured out by the common foot-rule of good and evil. Belinda is one of them. And Roger Temple, cruel malice of fate, is precisely the man to appreciate the wild bitter-sweetness of her character to the uttermost. Men of his semi-poetic stamp fall in love often with conventional dolls, as he has done; marry conventional dolls, as he will do; and, pathetically conscious that the nearest relations of their lives have been incomplete, go to their grave without tasting the nectar of true passion once, for sheer lack of opportunity. But let opportunity come! Let a woman, fresh and faultless from nature's hand, cross their path—

Well, our little story of elective affinities has not progressed as far as that yet. Roger is engaged to Rose, Belinda to Mr. Jones; and Belinda and Roger are nothing to each other, for one more quarter of an hour at all events.

They talked on and on, and presently Augustus is forgotten, and presently Rose. Belinda is Lagri-

mas again, and Roger the wandering Englishman who has fallen but too quickly a victim to Lagrimas's charms. By and by the air, all at once, grows fresh ; a flicker of pink light begins to show above the glorious chain of mountain peak toward the east, and with a start Belinda realizes that it is morning—that Miss Burke will be back before noon, that Roger is the lover of Rose, and that she has decided to spend her life at Clapham with Mr. Augustus Jones !

"Captain Temple, do you know that the sun is going to rise, that we have been out here since midnight, you and I ? I hope you never mean to talk of reforming me again. Oh, if Rose knew ! Shall you tell her ? "

"Shall you tell Mr. Jones, Belinda ? "

And then their eyes meet, with a sweet sudden look of intimacy ; they have been acquainted now near upon a dozen hours, and the girl questions him no more.

They bid good-by and part ; the tacit promise exchanged, though no word of promise be spoken, of seeing each other at the same place and time to-morrow night. And then, left alone to conscience and tobacco, Roger Temple, it may be hoped, feels some misgivings as to the wisdom of his first attempt at reformation, some doubts as to the safety of this close neighborhood of balconies. As for Belinda—Belinda has passed her seventeen years of life, reader, in a moral atmosphere unfavorable to the development of casuistic niceties, and she is simply in a seventh heaven of happiness. Really in love with Roger

Temple, after one night's flirtation on a balcony, she is not ; but she is in the state dangerously apt to precede real love in a very young and very natural girl's heart. Vanity sweetly flattered, imagination kindled, just the least little delightful thrilling sense of treading on thin ice aroused. Oh, blessed prudishness that made Rose banish him from beneath the roof of her hotel ! Oh, blessed chance that sent him to a room and balcony in the *Maison Lohobia-gue* ! Stealing to the dusky mirror, she smiles at her own image in the day-dawn, unwittingly loosens the half-dead passion-flower from her hair, then, exchanging Miss Burke's training silk for her own shabby Cinderella frock, creeps down to the second floor with the borrowed brilliants, and actually gives the saint's cold hand a kiss of gratitude as she replaces them.

Poor good old Beata—shut away in her glass-case, from moonlight, flower-scents, handsome faces ; from all the pleasant things we still enjoy and sin through in the flesh ! Something in the peculiar waxy flavor of the hand carries Belinda back, in remembrance, to the days of the Irish convent, when her highest reward for any exceptional good conduct was to be held aloft and allowed to salute the fingers or toes of some 'glass-encased beatitude. The remembrance leads on to another. At the end of the convent garden, sheltered by thickest growing wych-elms, was a certain walk, from whence could be seen, through iron railings, the world—wicked outer world of men and women, passing along one of the smaller streets of Cork. None of the small children were ever allowed to tread

that walk ; and to deter them thence, the old French nun who watched their play used to speak of it, beneath her breath, as “*le bont du monde*.” No good little girl could surely wish to go to the “*bout du monde !*” And Belinda did wish it passionately, and though she obeyed the letter of the injunction through love—her highest, only law—never ceased to gaze with longing eyes toward the spot whose forbidden imagined delights rendered all the legitimate garden walks so tasteless.

Does the same taint of primeval sin lurk in her heart still ?

When she returns up stairs, she peeps once more through the dilapidated venetian at her neighbor’s balcony ; she smells the odor of his pipe, muses awhile on Lagrimas, Granada, Alhambra—her “*bout du monde*” now—

And then she goes to her pillow and dreams ; not of any perplexing questions of *meum* and *tuum* ; not of Rosie’s lover, not of her own ; but of boleros, bull-fights, henroost robbing with Costa, and similar every-day diversions of her vagabond life.



CHAPTER IX.

THE FINGER OF FATE.

ROSE is a woman of whom it may be fairly said that to love her is a liberal education in folly.

Roger Temple finds his acquirements in this valuable branch of knowledge ever steadily increasing. Leaving her of an evening in as deadened a state of brain as the utterances of a beloved object can possibly induce, it seems to him at times that even Rose can never astonish him more on the score of unreason. And lo, next morning, she startles him with some new outbreak, some fresh vagary of millinery, mind, or morals, that leaves all past ones far behind!

Upon a clever woman, a good woman, a wicked woman, a man may in some measure count; upon a foolish one never. Folly, a certain pitch attained, seems inexhaustible as genius itself—possibly, if mental qualities could be put to the same nice tests as material ones, might prove to be genius of some spurious or bastard kind. Especially in aught that

ministers to personal vanity is this inexhaustibleness patent. Women you may find in plenty who believe one man, two men, twenty men, to be their victims. Rose is ready, on the weakest evidence, or on no evidence at all, to believe it of the universe. Borne on the strong pinion of vanity, she can even rise to being imaginative, as the sequel of this history will show.

"You would never guess what has happened, Roger, never! And I am not at all sure that I am wise to tell you, you naughty, naughty, jealous man —only when he comes it may be worse!"

It is noon next day; and in Rosie's cool, Moorish-looking drawing-room at the Isabella the lovers are love-making, the widow in an embroidered India muslin wrapper (one of the eight becoming morning dresses she has brought with her from London), and as coy and coquettish and playful of demeanor as any youthful bride of eighteen.

"If it will ease your conscience to make confession, I promise solemnly to restrain my jealousy," says Roger; not, it may be presumed, without some uneasy conscience twinges of his own. "You have made another conquest, Rose?"

The droop of Mrs. O'Shea's eyelids says yes.

"I was sure of it. That little Portuguese Jew at breakfast—no, the Spanish officer last night at the Casino! Rose, if it is that good-looking Spanish scoundrel—"

"Oh, Roger, don't be violent! How can I help men being so ridiculous? and I, who never give any

one any encouragement! No, it is neither the Spaniard nor the Portuguese—I mean it is some one else as well. Oh, I do feel so guilty, I'm sure these things never happen to anybody but me."

"I dare say they happen to most pretty women," says Roger. He seldom lets go an opportunity of administering the expected lump of sugar to the widow's lips. "But put me out of my torture, quick. Who is my latest rival, Rosie?"

"Well, you must know, dear, Spencer went to the post-office this morning and there was a letter for me."

"It was a declaration?"

"It was from cook. I left orders with her to write regularly every week—and indeed a friend of Spencer's is staying in the house as a precaution. I never like to doubt the honesty of the lower classes, Roger, and of course you cannot make away with tables and chairs; still there are the clocks and the ornaments, and as to house linen—"

"But my rival, Rosie, my rival? While you talk about the cook and the house linen, I am burning with impatience, remember."

For once at least during his courtship, Roger Temple contrives to unite veracity with sweetness.

"Well, it seems he called very soon after he left. 'A tall, military-looking gentleman with a moustache,' cook says, 'and would take no denial, but walked in as if the place was his own'—those are exactly her words—'and looked round at everything, and particularly hard at the photograph of

Captain Temple in the breakfast room.' Ah, Roger, what he must have suffered! Well I know what he must have suffered at that moment?"

"What who must have suffered, my love? The end of the story is naturally that cook searched for the teaspoons on the military gentleman's departure, and found them missing."

"The end of the story is nothing of the kind," says Rose, fluttering up her feathers like a little sparrow. "The end of the story is that cook gave him my address here—and I am afraid told him *other news* that made him most unhappy—and he said he should follow me straight to St. Jean de Luz. I call that something like constancy, poor fellow! Although he must have known the hopelessness of his position, to resolve, without a moment's hesitation, upon following me."

"Other people, knowing the hopelessness of their position, have remained constant to you, Rose," says Roger Temple tenderly.

Does it flash across his mind that fidelity seems to be more closely allied with the state of hopelessness than with that of hope?

"And now I shall have you both upon my hands at once. And I am sure he is of the most *fiery*, combative temperament—those glowering deep-set eyes that give a man such a look of power, and beautiful, long, auburn moustache, and six feet one at least," adds Rose with a reproachful glance at her lover's inferior stature.

"Rosie," says Roger, with a thoroughly sincere

sigh, "do you want to drive me clean out of my senses? Who is he? Deep-set eyes, auburn moustache, power, and six feet one! I cannot endure it, Rosie. There are limits, remember, even to my long-suffering."

Rose dimples and colors and casts her eyelids up and down as, all unsuspecting of latent irony, she drinks in this flattery which is the very meat and drink of her small soul.

"It is Colonel Drewe, then, as you insist upon knowing. He refused, it seems, to give his name to the servants, but I—oh, there are intuitions that cannot be mistaken. It is Stanley Drewe."

"Drewe, Drewe—the lackadaisical old dandy with a flower in his button-hole, whom you have got in your photograph book? You had a tremendous flirtation with Colonel Drewe once, my dear, had you not?"

"You would not blame me in that affair, Roger, if you knew all. You were far away in India; indeed, it was in poor Major O'Shea's lifetime, and I am sure his passions were so violent I never dared look at any man twice. But whatever party I was seen at during one whole season, Colonel Drewe was certain to be there too. If I went to the opera I saw him. If I drove in the park I saw him. It was an infatuation, and if I had been free—however, I was not free!" says Rose in a tone of exquisite abnegation. "I was not free, and he behaved beautifully, poor Stanley! He went to Gibraltar with his regiment, and we have corresponded a little since;

only the other day, indeed, I sent him an announcement of Uncle Robert's death. What a blow this must be to him!"

A look not so much of anger as of pain passes over Roger Temple's face. He may have ceased to be enamored of Rose; he has not ceased to be enamored of his own ideal love for her: the love which, wise or foolish in itself, has for a dozen years been part and parcel of his life. For the sake of that, not because of the *fade* flirtation of these two elderly London butterflies, he feels wounded.

"A blow to Colonel Drewe! What—our engagement, Rosie? Had matters gone so far between you then, that Colonel Drewe has a right to consider your marrying another man than himself 'a blow'?"

"Ah, Roger dearest, I implore you not to be angry! How can I control poor Stanley's feelings? I declare between you all, I don't know which way to turn. And now to think of the dreadful embarrassment of having him here!"

"As far as I am concerned, there will be none whatsoever," answers Roger coldly. "You and Colonel Drewe, of course know best what reason you have for embarrassment."

He is annoyed, lowered, for her sake, rather than his own. But Rose, who is no adept at reading the character of others, sets him down simply as "jealous" (a mistake into which vanity not unfrequently conducts intelligence of her calibre), and twitters on and on about poor Stanley's infatuation and deep-

set eyes, and her own innocence and the embarrassment of riches that awaits her in the way of admirers, until the very excess of her folly brings her lover back to good-temper. Dear simple-hearted little Rosie! Who can be angry with her long? Her vanities are so childlike, her flirtations, like her whole character, so transparent.

" You may be sure he rushed to England as soon as ever he got the news of Uncle Robert's death. I am not a fool, Roger, and I don't think myself quite hideous, but I know very well that men like to marry money, and that in my small way I am an heiress! Can't you fancy him looking round the house *speculating*? And then to come upon your portrait. I wonder, now, whether it was quite proper of me to have it hung up yet? Nothing would pain me more than for Colonel Drewe to think me indelicate."

" We are certain, I suppose, that it is Colonel Drewe, Rosie? There is no one else among your numerous victims whom the cap could fit?"

Oh, yes, on this point Rosie is confident. If it had not been for the moustache it might have been the Rev. Rowland Lascelles, whom she met last year at Malvern, the most elegant, the most spiritual-minded of men. But no, with a conscious little sigh over her Malvern reminiscences, the moustache settles it. Colonel Drewe it must be and no other. " And what makes it the more remarkable, Roger," adds Rose with her most sapient and logical air, " I declare it looks like the finger of fate—I dreamed of poor Major O'Shea only last night! It seemed some

one in America had told him of my engagement—in dreams, alas, in dreams only, our dead are restored to us!—and he had brought me over the most lovely turquoise and pearl set as a wedding present (Major O'Shea always used to say how pearls became me), and was exceedingly pleased at the marriage, and said he wished you joy from his heart. Was it not most remarkable? ”

“ Most remarkable and most unpleasant,” answers Roger, getting annoyed in earnest. “ For God’s sake, Rose, dream no more dreams! Rivals of flesh and blood, powerful colonels and elegant parsons, I can stand, not the others—”

But happily, at this very delicate juncture, the door opens, and the entrance of Belinda and Miss Burke puts an end to the love scene.





CHAPTER X.

“LAGRIMAS !”

AMISS Lydia Burke is by no means an unfavorable sample outwardly of the Woman of the Future. She has a tolerable sandy complexion, tolerable sandy hair, teeth almost over-white and even, and a pair of very wide-awake, and small grey eyes. Her walk is wiry ; her figure like a bit of watch-spring ; her age—the hitherward side of forty. What in this bright, energetic-looking lady should have introduced the sad elements of hatred and disbelief into Belinda’s young life ? What has caused the inalienable discrepancies between them ?

Mainly, I imagine, this unchangeable law ; that reality and shams will no more mix together than will oil and water. Born of no superhonest stock, reared in no superhonest school, one virtue from her earliest babyhood took sturdy root in Belinda’s soul : the virtue of absolute truth. Organizations exist so finely tempered that their possessors can detect the presence of certain flowers or animals as if by instinct.

Belinda is gifted with the same prescience, the same kind of moral divining-rod as regards imposture. And poor Miss Burke, while she forever preaches Earnestness, Woman's Work, Woman's Mission (with big capitals), is an arch impostor—false, sham, to her finger-tips! Not an uninteresting type to the philosophic student of character; but to an ignorant, ardent mind like Belinda's, about as nauseating a specimen of human nature as our race can produce.

Ten, fifteen years ago, say the traditions of Eastern travellers, Miss Lydia Burke used to haunt the hotels of Egypt and Palestine. She was a prettyish woman then; prettyish, unprotected, and, though not a girl, young enough to be regarded with suspicion by ladies travelling under the legitimate wing of husbands or brothers. Perhaps there were no really queer stories about her—I mean, perhaps none of the queer stories about her had real foundation. That she was in the habit of borrowing money from any man who would lend her money is matter of fact. But in those days, it must be remembered, Miss Lydia Burke had projects of founding ragged Jew schools in the Levant. Who shall say that the loans did not go to ragged Jew schools in the Levant? Later on, she frequented the Alps; unprotected still; still short of money; an indomitable climber; Bloomerish in dress; rather less shunned by ladies than formerly—alas, her prettiness was fading! feared exceedingly by bachelor parties of young men, on whom, under various pretexts, she was wont to fasten with a cruel and leechlike tenacity. After this—

well, after this, Miss Burke wrote a book, "My Experiences." Then, a little more Bloomerish, a little more faded, financial resources at a lower ebb than ever, turned up in London.

The book, a hash of doubtful Oriental narrative and still more doubtful Exeter Hall piety, was simply below criticism ; but, by one of those outside chances occasionally to be met with in the world of writers as of men, it sold. It sold ; and Miss Burke straightway manufactured a three-volume novel—carefully flavored with the same kind of spice as before, but with the piety omitted—which did not sell. And then she became earnest for life ! Shortened her skirts, had her jackets cut after the fashion of men's coats, wriggled her way ere long upon platforms, I think made a speech or two about female suffrage, and began in common conversation to speak of women as Woman. And it was just when she had reached this melancholy turning point in the downward road that the advertisement in the "Times" brought Belinda O'Shea into her hands.

Finding herself a good deal snubbed by the leading members of the strong sisterhood in London—neophytes without cash are apt in more sets than one to be lightly looked upon by the elders—poor Burke had to consider how Earnestness could be made to pay, and in a happy moment of inspiration composed the advertisement that sealed Belinda's fate. And then commenced the adventuress life again on the Continent—the adventuress life, but with a difference !

Earnest English people, pious English people, all English people, as far as the writer has personally known or heard of, like to be connected with anything that is connected with an earl. Miss Burke liked exceedingly to be connected with the Earl of Liskeard's granddaughter, although, as from the first moment Belinda's eyes looked her hollow soul through, she disliked the society of the child herself.

"The Honorable Belinda O'Shea and Miss Burke." So, during the early days of their wanderings, she invariably caused their names to be written in hotel books or on continental church lists, despite all Belinda's angry protests against the imposture. If they travelled in the same railway carriage with an Englishman, if they sat opposite an Englishman at breakfast or dinner, Miss Burke always contrived to trade upon him with her small companion's birth and parentage ; and, with singularly few exceptions, found the venture answer. Belinda remembers still —bitterly, chokingly remembers dinners and drives and theatre tickets presented to them at that period by chance *table-d'hôte* acquaintance, and of which she now knows her poor little forlorn aristocratic society must have been the price. Facts proving two things, reader ; first, that Miss Burke had inborn aptitude for the money-raising or adventuress craft ; secondly, that there are men in the world who will pay to shake hands with an earl's granddaughter, just as others will pay to see General Tom Thumb or the two-headed nightingale.

As time went on, Belinda, it need hardly be said,

turned rebellious on this as on most other points. "I am not an Honorable, and I will not have you write me down as one, madam. The earl, my grand-papa, has never seen me, does not mean to see me, does not acknowledge my existence. If you bring in his name before any of these *commis voyageurs* again, I will tell them the truth."

And Miss Burke knew the sturdy, nothing-fearing nature of her charge too well to risk the experiment.

They never came to open or violent rupture. Belinda's money stood between Miss Burke and want; Miss Burke stood between Belinda and her stepmother. They detested each other, were necessary to each other, kept together. Is not a good half of the world forever performing that same duo, in this queer comedy of errors, this jumble of mistaken, enforced companionships, that we call society!

Poor little Belinda is so curiously frivolous, so thoroughly, constitutionally devoid of all seriousness of purpose, Miss Burke explains, whenever the subject seems to require self-extenuation. "But, her health being delicate—her papa and mamma both in an early grave!—I try to reconcile the out-of-door life she leads to my conscience."

"Burke is the out-and-outest impostor that ever walked," Belinda will say to her gamin friends. "I saw Tartufe at the play once, and by heaven he was nothing to her! What is she an impostor for? If I knew *that* I might detest her less. I believe the creature is false to her own conscience. I believe she dreams lies."

So things have gone on until they are as we see them now. Miss Burke collecting ideas for her new great work on social reform, "The Woman of the Future;" Belinda running wild, neglected, as nearly on the road to ruin as was ever innocent, honest little human soul, about the streets of St. Jean de Luz. The practical at war with the ideal, as we so often find to be the case in this imperfect world.

Nothing can be blander than the meeting between Belinda's stepmamma and her preceptress. Miss Burke has held religiously to the letter of the bargain sealed between them in London, has kept the girl conveniently out of Rosie's way during the past three years. Rosie has held to hers; each quarterly payment for maternal watchfulness and superior intellectual culture has been paid in advance without a question. They begin to talk platitudes. Rose thinks dear Belinda grown, though a little sunburnt; Miss Burke trusts dear Mrs. O'Shea has overcome the fatigues of travelling? A very wearying journey from London to St. Jean de Luz.

"Yes, indeed, especially when one is travelling alone with one's maid," cries Rose, sensitive even as to the smaller proprieties, and virtuously conscious that she only "met" Roger Temple in Paris, Bordeaux, and elsewhere. "One does feel so miserably helpless without a gentleman!"

"Well for my part, I see no use in them whatever," says Miss Burke. "When you are alone you have nothing but your luggage to look after. When you are burdened with a man," this with a depreciation,

tory glance in the direction of Roger, "you have to look after him and your things too."

"My things!" exclaims Belinda in her mocking voice. "Well, Miss Burke, in the present state of affairs, my 'things' would not require much looking after, with a man or without one. Do you know, ma'am," seriously, "the washer-woman says there is really nothing more of mine for her to bring back. The last remaining tatters I had have vanished—carried away by the birds, I suppose, to build their nests."

She perches herself on her accustomed favorite place, the corner of the table, and looks round cheerfully on the company as she volunteers this information.

A cold glitter comes into Burke's eyes. "You are almost of an age, I must say, Miss O'Shea, to begin to care for order. No achievement in life can ever be made without order. When I was seventeen I had no greater delight than in the neat arrangement of my wardrobe."

"But I have no wardrobe to keep neat, ma'am. Wardrobe? Why, this is my only frock, and as to stock—"

"Belinda, my dear Belinda, you forget! Another time!" interrupts Rose, coloring. "What have you been doing with yourself to-day, my love? And last night—did Mr. Jones see you safe home? I had a note from him this morning saying he had gone off to the mountains, and that I must ask you for particulars. Now what does it all mean?"

She frisks over, like a little lambkin, to her step-daughter's side, and putting her arm round her waist—Belinda holding herself uncompromisingly stiff under the caress—begius to gush and titter, school-girl fashion, in her ear. Miss Burke and Roger are thus left to make conversation for each other.

"A very interesting country this, sir," observes the lady looking sourly, at Roger's handsome face—oh, Miss Burke, you who fifteen years ago, could look at no man without a melting smile! But such are the results of earnestness. "Interesting, I mean to those who visit with a purpose."

"Yes, I am told you get very fair snipe-shooting here in winter," answers Roger, who does not understand the argot of Miss Burke's sect.

"I speak of the inhabitants; sunk now in superstition, but the remnants of a noble race. You are, perhaps, not aware that the Basque has outlived five distinct peoples—the Carthaginians, Celts, Romans, Goths, and Saracens?"

"Murray," says Belinda, in a stage whisper. "'Introductory Remarks on the Pyrenees,' page two hundred and forty-nine."

Roger strokes his moustache and tries to look edified. "The Basque must certainly be very old," he begins, foolishly.

"But the work that I am engaged on at present, the work that indeed fills every moment of my time, is the search of illustration. You have, perhaps, heard through Miss O'Shea that I am writing a book? No; I might have guessed as much. Miss

O'Shea's interests do not lie in the direction of my own. A book entitled 'The Woman of the Future.' I am a laborer, sir, though a humble one, in the greatest reformation of our day, the work of restoring woman to the pedestal from whence the blinded prejudices of centuries have dethroned her."

"Ah, yes," says Roger, in no very enthusiastic tone, and glancing as he speaks at the patches where darns ought to be in Belinda's stockings. "For my part," he adds, gallantly, "I cannot see that any reformation is needed. It seems to me that women are exceedingly charming as they are."

"As the Turk, as the debased Asiatic thinks of his slaves!" cries Miss Burke, hotly. "Do you, an Englishman, actually advance the proposition that to be charming is a fit motive for an immortal being's existence?"

"The most charming women appear to me to be so without any motive at all," says Roger, mentally measuring the distance between his adversary and the door. "But I am really the worst fellow living at an argument."

"Oh, that is a very easy way of escape. It is perfectly evident to what cynical school you belong —the surface light in which you regard our sex! Can you solemnly affirm, sir, I ask it with the earnestness the subject requires, that you do not look upon us as toys?"

Thus put, as it were, upon oath, Roger Temple considers Miss Burke's personal attractions more closely than he has yet done, the thin, cold features,

the glistening eyes, the watch-spring figure. He feels that he does not, that in his wildest moments he never could look upon her in the obnoxious light she deprecates, and with a perfectly clear conscience answers, "No."

"Then may I ask what *do* you look upon us as?" says Burke, pitilessly.

Roger not only measures the distance between himself and the door; he rises to his feet. He has been held a brave soldier in action, a hardy sportsman in the field; but he is horribly afraid of Miss Lydia Burke. "I—I really beg pardon—but I have usually looked upon women as women," he answers, humbly.

Miss Burke turns her head away in contempt.

"It really is most wonderful," sighs Rose, who has caught the last word or two of the discussion, "most extraordinary how gentlemen do dislike intellect in us! I am sure, for myself, I envy superior women, and I have always wished and wished to be blue; haven't you, Belinda?"

"Oh, I like my natural hue well enough, Rosie," answers the girl, pertly. "Still, if I were forced to change, I believe I would as soon be blue as some other colors. Superior women do not usually wear rouge or pearl powder, do they?" She looks more thoroughly hard, more deliberately, elfishly wicked than ever as she implants this savage stab. Alas, where are all the budding graces, where is the soft, shy, dawning womanliness of the "Lagrimas" of last night?

"But must your choice, of necessity, lie between the two, my dear Belinda?" Roger asks, in that quiet tone of his, which at once softens and exasperates her. "Are blue and rouge the only two colors in the world?"

"Certainly they are not, Captain Temple. There is sun-tan, for instance, Van Dyck brown; the fine natural color of gamins, beggars, gypsies, and all the great unwashed of nature. My color."

"Unwashed! You quite pain me with these expressions, Belinda," says Rose. "But you must try not to despair about your complexion, dear. Spencer shall make you some of her milk of roses. She got the receipt from Lady Harriet, and they say the effect is extraordinary; that sun-tan, and *even freckles*, can be cured by it. For my part," encouragingly, "I have no great faith in cosmetics. You are fair or you are swarthy by constitution."

Her last fatal fancy about Colonel Drewe has melted poor Rosie into amiability towards the whole world, Belinda even included. So amiable, so elated is her frame of mind, that she has been rash enough to whisper her little budget of hopes and fears and projects into the girl's unsympathetic ear. "An old—ah, if she must confess truly, a dear friend coming after her to St. Jean de Luz. Could anything be imagined more difficult than the part she would have to play? And Roger so jealous already—that is his weak point, you know, poor fellow, jealousy! And will Belinda find out where Spencer can buy one of those becoming Spanish combs and

a mantilla?" For Rosie's imagination always flies to the millinery department—the stage properties of any coming event—as the imagination of a more highly endowed woman might fly to what she would say, or feel, or dissemble. If the Colonel make his appearance of a morning, Rose has decided that she will receive him in white cashmere, ever so sparingly relieved by the palest shade of lavender ribbons; if at night, in a high Spanish comb, a lace veil, and jet cross. What *could* be more appropriate than a lace veil and jet cross to a lovely little widow who is roaming about the world breaking the heart of every ill-fated man she comes across!

It is long before the visit draws to an end; and Captain Temple, doubly guarded by Rosie and Miss Burke, does not exchange another syllable with Belinda. At last, in the middle of one of Miss Burke's finest perorations on woman's destiny, the girl brusquely takes her departure from the room; and accompanying her to the top of the hotel stairs, Roger gets a word or two with her alone.

"You are not going to play paume to-day?" For she has a racket ball and schistera, as usual, in her hand. "Under this broiling sun! Belinda, I will not allow it."

"Will you not indeed, Captain Temple? Why not, pray?"

"I do not choose you to spoil your complexion, for one thing."

"My unwashed complexion that is to be improved by Lady Harriet's milk of roses! Isn't it

fine to hear Rosie and Miss Burke talk! What advantages I have had, sir, in being guided by those two extremes of feminine intelligence."

"Promise me you will not play paume, Belinda, to-day, or any other day."

She hesitates and looks down; a quiver on her lips, a tell-tale blush shining beneath the clear olive of her cheek.

"*Lagrimas!*" he whispers softly. "Will you promise?"

And then she raises her eyes. They promise—unconsciously they promise a world too much to Roger Temple.





CHAPTER XI.

A TRANSFORMATION SCENE.

HAVE you watched an almond tree flower? Bare shivering boughs, to-morrow, under the first warm kiss of April, a cloud of odorous blossom. Such change, such sudden miracle of growth is wrought during the next four days in Belinda. Her cheek gains color, her figure roundness; her hair, no longer disfigured by the villainous plaits, hangs round her neck in waves of glossy chestnut. Her movements lose their masculine roughness, her dress grows neat. Girlish grace, girlish softness, modesty—all have come to her. Who shall unriddle these things?

"Belinda is not going to be so unfortunately plain, I do believe," Rose will remark complacently to her lover. "She has quite made up her mind to marry Mr. Jones—quite; and you see how she brightens up at the prospect of riches. I am afraid I was right about that poor thing from the first, Roger. Belinda has no heart."

Miss Burke accounts for the transformation other-

wise. "A nature like Belinda's," says Miss Burke, "can only develop from one frivolity to another. Her childish love of play outgrown, and Belinda takes to—what? Earnest work, higher culture, recognition of the world's wants and miseries? No! To muslins, ribbons, and laces; the livery, the badge of woman's degradation in the social scale."

So think these ladies. What does Roger Temple think?

Roger Temple is in the frame of mind, reader, when we all of us are apt to shun self-communion, to keep the eyes of the spirit shut. By nature the most chivalrously loyal of men, Roger is drifting, daily, hourly drifting into disloyalty. He is more attentive, more devoted than ever to Rosie during the hours that he is at her feet—poor, unconscious Rosie, perpetually devising toilets for Colonel Drewe, who as yet comes not! But there are a good many hours of the day when he is not at Rosie's feet. The adorers of mature beauty are generally debarred from adoration during the forenoon, that sacred, mysterious time for women to whom heaven hath given one face and who manufacture to themselves another. Till eleven o'clock every morning Roger is free, and Belinda also. After the Casino ball at night he is free again; and then, in the starlight, "Lagrimas" steals out upon the balcony (so fatally near his own) of the *Maison Lohobiagne*!

Miss Burke, absorbed in the "Woman of the Future," sees nothing. Rosie enwrapped in lavender ribbons, Spanish combs, and agitated suspense

about that elegant creature Stanley, suspects nothing. And then, under the southern sky, in this do-nothing life, the path, no difficult one in any climate, that leads from flirtation to friendship, from friendship to a warm feeling, is so easy. Conscience? Why, 'tis too hot in St. Jean de Luz for such compunctions visitings of nature! The mere act of existing is a Lethe; a dream of sapphire skies and sapphire sea, of romance, music, passion-flowers on a balcony, and one exquisite girl's face shining from amidst them. Alas, the pity that to dreams so flattering sweet comes invariably awakening so substantial!

Four glowing nightless days pass by like one: Miss Burke engaged philosophically, Rose making futile millinery preparations for Colonel Drewe, Roger Temple and Belinda falling about as desperately in love with each other as ever two people fell on this contradictory earth. For the fifth day Rose has planned an eight hours' excursion into Spain; *Hendaye*, Fontarabia, home through the mountain pass of Behobia by moonlight. Mr. Jones is to return early in the morning from his tour, and as a matter of course will accompany them. "Two pairs of lovers—I never heard of anything so ridiculous," says Rosie. With Miss Burke, note-book in hand, as duenna or fifth wheel of the coach.

Such is the day's plan: a plan, like the great Frederic's, "fort beau sur le papier," but destined to vary considerably from the original rough draft, as the fairest mortal projects do when reduced to the harsh reality of practice.

And in the first place as regards Mr. Jones. Augustus arrives punctually by the early morning train from Bayonne, and with lover-like ardor makes his way at once under the broiling sun to the Maison Lohobiague, where Belinda, already equipped for the day's excursion, meets him just outside the house. Forgotten Jones during his absence, she has not; nor her own quasi encouragement of his suit, having indeed been pointedly reminded of both about six times during each twenty-four hours by Rose. But just at this present moment, dressed, poor little girl, in a summer frock and hat that Spencer has condescendingly made up for her, a flower in her waist-belt, the sunshine that human lives know once in its extremest brightness shining from every feature of her face—at this particular moment, I say, the sudden apparition of Augustus, more blistered than ever after his journey, more mosquito-bitten, more amative, comes upon Belinda with all the cold chill of an unexpected misfortune. She changes color painfully, does not offer to take his outstretched hand, and can find no utterance of welcome more flattering, more lover-like, than the monosyllable, "You."

"Me," says Mr. Jones, ungrammatically tender. "I have not kept you waiting, I hope? You have not been expecting me long?"

"Expecting? Well, certainly not. I don't know that I expected you at all," answered Belinda dryly. "You have seen Rose?"

No, Augustus has not yet had that pleasure. He found a note from Mrs. O'Shea on his table, invit-

ing him to accompany them for the day into Spain and then—"Then, of course, I rushed off at once to see *you*, Belinda," he adds in tenderer accents than before. "Has time hung heavy on your hands?" Mr. Jones has an unhappy knack of composing sentences brimful of murdered aspirates! "Has your heart told you that—that some one you cared for a little was away during the last four days?"

"My time has not hung in the least heavily on my hands," answered Belinda coldly, emphasizing every "h." "But I have been aware of your absence, if you mean that."

"And what have you been doing with yourself? No paume-playing, I hope?"

"I have given up paume-playing forever," she exclaims, her cheeks glowing, a sudden shame coming into her eyes as she makes the confession.

"My dear Belinda, this delightful compliance with my wishes," begins Augustus.

"Your wishes!" she interrupts him quickly. "What do you mean by that, sir? What do you suppose your wishes have had to do in the matter?"

"A good deal, I should hope, considering how we stand to each other as—as engaged people, and that," says young Crœsus, purpling.

Belinda turns from him impetuously; she trifles with the flower in her belt, she stoops and pats Costa, who with an air of dignified triumph sits in the sunshine eyeing the discomfiture of his enemy askance.

"I did not think you would begin any of that

ridiculous nonsense again, Mr. Jones," she remarks, after a minute's silence. "Engaged, what for, pray? Maccaroons at *Harranbour's*? We shall have time enough to get some, I dare say, before we start for Spain."

Without answering a word, Jones shifts his position from one leg to the other, then stands critically gazing into the transparent, girlish face before him. Wounded vanity has intuitions keen as those of love itself; nay, in nine times out of ten, I would say, has intuitions that come a thousandfold straighter and swifter to the mark! Wounded vanity is flooding Mr. Jones's intelligence with a curious amount of light at this moment.

"I don't know how it is, but it seems to me that you have altered a good deal since I went away, Miss Belinda. Upon my word, you look three, four any number of years older."

"That is not a complimentary speech to make to a young lady, is it?" cries Belinda, but in a fluttering, ill-assured voice, with the traitor blood still deepening on her cheeks.

"And your dress—all those refined female elegances with which I have so often wished to see you invested," says Augustus pompously. "But I suppose, as you expected me to-day, I may without vanity attribute a little of that to—"

"Pray don't hesitate."

"To the very laudable desire of giving me pleasure, my dearest Belinda."

Upon this she lifts her eyes, and returns his gaze

unflinchingly. "I have taken to 'refined elegances,' as I have given up paume-playing, to suit my own taste. I never thought for one moment of giving you or any one else pleasure, never."

The natural expression, by no means an angelic one, of Mr. Jones's face, replaces in a second all the oily tenderness which, as a suitor, he had thought it wise of late to dissemble. Truth, he feels, is going to be told between him and this keen-tongued little vixen at last, and he is quite determined to render truth as unpalatable to her as may be. "Well, Miss O'Shea," looking at his watch as he speaks, "you are not in a particularly complimentary mood this morning, it seems; so the sooner we wish each other good-bye the better. As regards your party into Spain, you will mention to Mrs. O'Shea, perhaps, that circumstances do not allow of my accompanying you."

"I will deliver any message you like to send by me, Mr. Jones."

"I have received a letter that calls me back at once to London, and shall leave this cursed hole with only too much pleasure, by the twelve o'clock train. However I have no doubt you will find Captain Temple a very willing substitute! Before we part there is one question that I should like, just for curiosity, to ask you. *What was your object in giving me the answer you did four evenings ago, here in your own lodgings?*"

"The answer!" she stammers. "I don't know

what answer you mean. Oh, Mr. Jones, do forgive me if I have offended you!"

"*What was your object, I ask?*" he persists savagely. "Is it so perfectly impossible to you to speak the truth?"

"I answered you more in jest than earnest. You know it. I said that we might try being engaged. We have tried it, and—the thing is impossible. Forgive me, Mr. Jones. I have acted very foolishly, very badly, I know, but I ask you to forgive me. I am wiser now."

"No doubt of it," says Augustus, with one of his odious smiles. It would be impertinent, I suppose, to inquire under whose influence your wisdom has been gained?"

She stands for several seconds dumb, as though she had not understood his question; then, from throat to temple, the poor little girl turns white. Her secret—a secret hitherto to her own inmost conscience—is bared before her, like a committed sin, in this moment's piercing light. She changes from pale to red, and then to pale again. Her whole childish face works piteously. "I—I am wiser now," is all she can repeat; oh, with what trembling lips, with what scorching, irrepressible shame!

"Wiser in one sense of the word, no doubt, you are," says Augustus, watching her with contemptuous coolness. "There may be two opinions, perhaps, as to the worldly wisdom of these little changes of fancy. Is it your stepmamma, I wonder, or Captain

Temple who is acting as your adviser? Not your stepmamma surely?"

At the insolence of his tone, his look, Belinda's self-possession returns to her. "My own heart is my adviser, sir," she cries. "My own heart tells me I could never endure to live a day with you as your wife, let alone a lifetime!"

"And have you made up your mind—although you do treat me so cruelly I must always take the warmest interest in your welfare—have you made up your mind, Belinda, to live under Captain Temple's roof for the future?"

"I shall do whatever he thinks best for me, sir." The words stab her; but she utters them with a kind of despairing resolution. "It would be impossible for me to live under the roof of any one I like and honor more than I do Roger Temple."

"Oh! What very delightful sentiments, what charming filial submission! And you were so desperately prejudiced, if you remember. Only four days ago you were ready to quarrel with me for assuming the possibility of Mrs. O'Shea's marriage."

"I did not know Roger Temple then," says Belinda bravely and simply. "I can excuse Rose now. I think she or any woman would be honored by becoming Roger Temple's wife."

And having got back to the familiar region of truth, the girl's stout spirit rallies. No further blush of shame rises to her cheek, no further tremble of the lip betrays her. Shame was for the first discovery of her weakness. For her love itself, mis-

placed, hopeless though it may be, she can feel none. Sure test, oh reader, by which to discover when love is of true metal and when counterfeit.

Mr. Jones makes his exit, not again to cross the stage of this little drama; and Belinda stands blankly gazing at a world from whence all fair perspectives, all gracious harmonies of color, seem abruptly blotted out. The cheerful streets—'tis a high Basque festival, and the town is thronged with peasants from the neighboring villages—the balconies with their gayly-painted awnings, the flush of purple hills across the river, every familiar object upon which she looks seems changed—vivid, intensified, as external objects become in moments of sharp bodily pain, and still distorted to Belinda's untuned, jarring sense. Her life is distorted. The gamin life, with its April joys and tears, is over. Over! why, she feels old already; those children playing yonder under the trees seem separate from her by a score of painful years! The past has died by sudden harshest blow, and she has no future. That is for Rose; for all happy women whose love has been sought for and returned. And then—

Then across the girl's heart sweep thoughts that are intoxication, memories of words spoken by Roger Temple to "Lagrimas" when there were only the night and solitude to hear—words carrying with them the ring of truth, of earnestness, all unlike the tawdry compliments he lavishes on Rose. Ah, if he care for her ever so slightly, and she may see him

sometimes, feel the pressure of his hand, meet the kindness of his eyes, can she not be contented?

Love in a girl of seventeen asks so little, expects so little, craves passionately for—it knows not what, yet can live content upon a word, a look, a hand pressure. Loveliest of human love! in an honest, untutored breast like Belinda's. I say nothing about young ladies reared in a fashionable boarding-school, nurtured on novels, and cherishing mysterious yearnings of the soul toward the dancing-master.

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CHAPTER XII.

THE MEMORY OF A KISS.

BN reaching the Hotel Isabella, Belinda finds her stepmother alone, dressed in the sprightliest, most juvenile white muslin wrapper, and wearing on the summit of her blonde locks what the Parisian milliners neatly term "a ravishing futility," in the way of a cap or badge of widowhood.

"Belinda! and no Mr. Jones? Well, it is positively a reprieve—I am too upset, too miserable to bear the presence of a man. Oh, my dear girl, think what tortures of suspense I am going through! Colonel Drewe has arrived—is staying in this very hotel."

There is not one of her little poses in which Rose is more successful than that of bashful girlish perturbation. In her youthful white dress, and holding a microscopic patch of cambric and valenciennes to her lips, she really at this moment does not look a day over two-and-twenty; in a half light, of course,

and viewed, as every work of genuine art deserves to be viewed, from the proper focus.

"It appears he came by a late train yesterday, but I knew nothing about his arrival till this morning. The poor fellow picked up Spencer's acquaintance in the courtyard, and questioned her, and oh, Belinda, I fear things are worse than I anticipated! Spencer says the fiery look that came into his eyes when she told him Captain Temple was here, was something fearful."

"Lucky that you can keep out of his way for the day, Rose. There was a beautiful Spanish duchess in this hotel last summer, and six duels were fought about her before the season was over. We must hope Colonel Drewe will have had time to get his fiery feelings under control by the time you come back to-night."

Mrs. O'Shea for a minute or more examines the pattern of her laced handkerchief in silence. "The duty that lies before me is a most cruel one," she sighs at last, looking up with soft, remorseful eyes at the ceiling. "I *hope*, in consenting to marry my poor Roger, I have acted conscientiously. I hope it, and I believe it. My rejection of him would have cut Roger Temple adrift from his last moral stay in life. But I cannot forget that there are other, it may be prior claims. You talk of duels jestingly, Belinda? You little know how necessary it is for me to see Colonel Drewe without delay, and alone. For want of women displaying discretion," says Rose

solemnly, "some men's lives have been sacrificed in positions like this."

"But where is he all this time, Rose—where is this fiery-eyed Colonel Drewe? If you mean to see him before we start, you must make haste about it. It is time for you to dress already."

"Ah, my dear child, there is the difficulty. Is it my duty to start at all?" And then, beckoning Belinda to her side, and speaking in whispers, Rose unfolds a series of little Machiavellian plans, by means of which she hopes to mystify everybody throughout the remainder of the day. Roger, in the first place, is to be told that she is suffering from headache, and the party must start for Spain without her. Then Colonel Drewe is to be admitted—not at first admitted; the wily Spencer must hold him at arm's length with accounts of her mistress's suffering condition until his feelings be sufficiently worked upon. "And then," says Rosie, "I shall take care, you may be sure, to put everything before him in a light as little wounding to his own vanity as possible. My engagement, fortunately, has never been actually given out; and I know, when I have him alone, I can say many things that will soften the blow to him. Poor, poor Stanley! Ah, if I could only persuade him to return quietly to England by this evening's express! Roger need never know more about the visit than I choose to let him know, and—"

"And altogether you will have told one, two, three falsehoods," interrupts Belinda, checking off

Rose's "mystifications" on her finger tips. "Three leading falsehoods and about a dozen small ones. Why have a headache? Why deceive either of them? Why not go on straight and let everything take its chance?"

"When you are a few years older, child, when you have seen as much of the jealousies of the human heart as I have, you will know that 'going on straight,' as you call it, does not answer. Gentlemen like being deceived if the deceit saves them from undergoing anything disagreeable, and those women who know how to deceive gracefully—*gracefully*, mind—are always the most popular."

Thus Rose according to her lights. Looking round among your acquaintance in cynical moments, you could almost say that from those supremely unwise lips of hers has fallen, for once, a remark not without its little grain of worldly wisdom.

At the door of the hotel Belinda finds Roger trying, with rather poor success, to look sympathetic, while Spencer holds forth to him respecting her mistress's headache. Spencer is characteristic—a blonde, faded young woman, largely restored by cheap art; as affected as many a really fashionable lady; and with finest natural ogle in the world. A vile copy—and still a copy, with what a likeness!—of her mistress. Women might look at their ladies' maids as in a mirror oftener than they think, if they had but common sense sufficient.

She manœuvres her eyes under their painted lids at Roger; twists her lips out of the form in which

God made them ; fabricates falsities by the dozen, unnecessary, gross falsities, where Rose had only stipulated for one innocent white lie or two. As the comedy proceeds, an Englishman, tall, of military cut, but with the unmistakable air about him of a man at odds with fortune (Colonel Drewe must surely have fallen in the world of late), peeps through the trellis of vine and jessamine that overshadows the salle-à-manger window close at hand, and listens. He shifts about a little ; he turns red ; gets one good stare at the handsome, unconscious face of his rival, then draws back—draws back, but—alas for military honor that I must confess it—listens still !

“ And so Rosie cannot go with us,” says Roger.

“ Rosie ! He calls her Rosie ! ” The unseen takes out his pocket handkerchief and wipes his forehead.

“ Belinda, what must we do ? Put off the excursion till another day—”

“ Mrs. O’Shea begs you would not on no account do that, Captain Temple,” says Spencer. “ It is one of her little headaches, you know, sir.”

“ Oh, he knows, does he ? ” thinks the gentleman behind the vines and jessamine.

“ I’m afraid Miss O’Shea and you was out too late last night, Captain Temple. Mrs. O’Shea complained of her ’ead before retiring.”

Roger again does his best to look contrite, and again fails signally. “ If Rosie really wishes us to go, Belinda ? Rosie is so unselfish—never likes other people to be disappointed—perhaps we had better be

guided by her. We shall be a nice little party of three, you and Miss Burke and myself—”

“And Mr. Jones,” adds Belinda. What on earth should make Colonel Drewe start so oddly at the sound of the girl’s voice? “Don’t forget that Mr. Jones has come back from the mountains.”

“Jones—ah, to be sure, Jones,” says Roger in an altered tone. “On second thoughts I don’t know that I have courage enough for the expedition. If Miss Burke were to get me alone among the ruins and begin to argue about the suffrage, I might become a convert to the Woman of the Future before I knew where I was. It will be safer for me to remain behind.”

Belinda turns away abruptly. “Amuse yourself well, Captain Temple,” she cries, looking back at him across her shoulder. “Mr. Jones is not going to Spain at all; in another hour Mr. Jones will be on his road to England; but never mind, Burke and I will have an improving day by ourselves. Good-bye. I have not a moment to lose.”

Her slip of a figure trips away out of the courtyard, and before she has progressed a dozen steps Roger Temple has joined her—is on his way to Spain; his terror of Miss Burke and of her doctrines, it would appear, suddenly overcome. Spencer watches them curiously. Whatever other personage in a love plot remains blind to the truth, be sure that the ladies’ maid is never long unenlightened. Spencer watches them, drawing inferences of her own as to the future happiness of Captain Temple and

her mistress. The stranger, from behind his cover of vines and jessamine, watches them also.

I have said that to-day is a high Basque festival. The country people have assembled, from far and near, in St. Jean de Luz, and it is with difficulty that Belinda and Roger can wedge their way along the narrow streets. In an opening beside the principal thoroughfare of the town, one of the great national matches of paume is at its height; the performers are picked men, champions from either side the frontier, and excitement fierce and fiery prevails among the spectators at every thrilling incident in the game. Fifty yards distant a peasant play, or pastoral, is being acted—the stage, a scaffolding of rough boards, supported on wine casks—before one of the poorer inns. At the turning of the next street comes a procession of priests and singing boys, bearing the sacrament from church to church. Tambour-playing, dancing, and inebriety are everywhere.

Belinda feels in a dream, still a dream that is no longer one of pain. Her child's life has been spoiled for her, 'tis true; and all the future's gold is for Rose, not her. But she, not Rose, is with Roger now. Their excursion into Spain will last some six or seven hours—six or seven hours to the good, out of a lifetime separation! Her hand is upon Roger's arm—he insists that she needs his help to get her through the crowd--and his eyes are telling her that she is fair; and her foolish heart beats with pleas-

ure ; and she wants nothing on the whole wide earth but what the moment gives her !

Propriety, in the shape of Miss Burke, overtakes them at the railway station. They get their tickets for Hendaye, the last town this side the frontier, and in another quarter of an hour are walking, as well as the scorching, breathless heat will allow them, along the banks of the Bidassoa. Here, advised of Murray, their plan is to take boat for Fontarabia—Fontarabia, that looks but a stone's throw distant, across the quivering expanse of harbor mud. But man and Murray may propose, fate finishes. They get into one of the unwieldy flat-bottomed boats that ply between France and Spain, are assured by the scarlet-skirted boatman, in patois, only understood of Belinda, that there will be water enough to carry them to Fontarabia this tide, and rather more than half way across run aground. The boatmen shove, swear, smile. When a Spaniard smiles you may know that your hour is come. "What is to be done ? Ah, God knows. This, then, is to be done, as their excellencies insist upon an answer. Either they will remain where they are some small three-quarters of an hour and walk ashore on their own legs, or be carried thither in the boatmen's arms, now ; or they can wait, a matter of several hours, for the return of the tide. Their excellencies will have the condescension to decide." Meanwhile the boatmen take out each a little roll of paper, and prepare, with the most dignified good breeding imaginable, to fold their midday *cigarritos*.

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"I vote for being carried ashore at once," cries Belinda. "Propriety, ma'am! What does that matter? I would rather be improper than have sunstroke any day."

"And I," says Miss Burke, "would sooner perish than be encircled by the arms of those men, of any men. I will never quit this boat living, save on my own feet."

And not by one hair's breadth can she be made to swerve from her principles. She will wait till the tide has so far ebbed that she may walk ashore across the mud; will wait, if need be, till nightfall; will risk the danger of sunstroke. To the profanation of a man's, although but a red-skirted boatman's arms, the Woman of the Future will never bring herself to submit.

"Well, if this indeed be the case, then," says Roger perfidiously, "if we cannot induce you"—induce her!—"to change your mind, Miss Burke, perhaps the best plan would be for Belinda and me to go ashore as we can, look out for a hotel, order dinner, and so on. This will give you more time for seeing Fontarabia afterwards, and—"

"Leave me, I beg, sir," says Miss Burke, putting up her umbrella sternly, "but without compliments. Miss O'Shea, I must ask you to dispose of your day entirely without reference to me. Settle with the boatmen? No, I thank you." Roger, enslaved by old-world superstitions as to woman's helplessness, having at this point weakly taken out his purse. "*I* will settle with them when they have fulfilled their

engagement, when I find myself safe on land, not before."

So the matter is settled. One of the men lifts Belinda from the boat, about as easily as a child lifts a kitten, then wades, bearing her in his arms, through the shallow water. Captain Temple is conveyed on the stout shoulders of the other. A couple of minutes later they are ashore on Spanish soil and alone.

"And now, Señora Lagrimas," says Roger, "what just cause or impediment should hinder you and me from going on to the Alhambra?"

The question is a jest, of course. Unfortunately, just as Roger puts it, Belinda's eyes meet his in one long, wistful, sorrowful look—then droop abashed. And the story is told.

As it is told in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, reader, the unbidden eloquence of look, or tone, or touch, making itself felt before the lips have ventured on the colder expedient of speech. Well—the intervening space of time that follows, be it of months or minutes, is, I take it, about the most ambrosial of all love's calendar, especially of love that shall never know its earthly end, to which the present is all in all. In well nigh every other condition of our lives we poor mortals look "before and after." In this evanescent one of hopeless unspoken passion we are content, fearfully content! No future for us; the whole of the chill years to come spent asunder; and we love each other, we are together now. Perhaps the forlorn rapture of that *now* equals anything that lawfully affianced lovers, with half a cen-

tury or so of a joint fireside in prospective, ever taste.

They explore the sights of Fontarabia as conscientiously as though they were some prosiac couple whose romance had begun with money considerations, and was now yawning itself into extinction throughout a wedding tour. They visit the ramparts, still lying in blackened ruins, as British gunpowder left them. They look down on the classic Three Fords, the scene of that wild night-struggle when the Duke won the passage of the Bidassoa, inch by inch, from old Soult. By and by they saunter up to the Church through the high street of the town—quaintest little high street, surely, in Christendom, with its flower-decked balconies, and thirteenth century porticoes, and roofs overhanging so far on either hand that scarce a strip of the fervent blue is visible overhead. But they forget two things: to search for a hotel or to order dinner. They also forget the existence of Miss Burke.

The church takes them more than an hour to walk round. Nothing remarkable in the way of art has Fontarabia's parish church to show; the gilded saints and virgins, the windows, the relics, are precisely like all others of their kind. But these two heretics visit every "station," pause before every altar, slowly, reverently, as though they were admiring the glories of St. Peter's. The mellowed light, the hush, the solitude, seem to shut them away, deliciously to shut them away, from all connection with the glaring outer world. They linger, side by side,

silent, not meeting each other's eyes, heaven knows what thoughts filling the hearts of each. At length the organ begins to play a dreamy set of waltzes, followed by an air from one of Verdi's operas. A sleepy-looking priest saunters down the aisle, putting on his gown as he goes; a sleepy-looking chorister boy with incense-burner and book saunters behind. And then in lounges a christening party, everybody gossiping and laughing, with that frank familiarity toward mother Church that characterizes the whole most Catholic nation. Belinda and Roger make their escape through a side door, left open by the drowsy-eyed priest, and which leads down five or six breakneck stairs, into the sacristy.

The sacristy is old, older by centuries than the main body of the church, and is filled with vests, stoles, canopies, dilapidated Beatas, and other ecclesiastical property of that nature. Our Lady of Pain, in mauve satin, stands at one end; our Lady of Delight, in amber silk, at the other. The air is redolent of stale incense, mustiness, and garlic—what place in Spain is *not* redolent of garlic? How if they were to open a window, afford their pagan lungs a little more of heaven's pure air and a little less of the manufactured odor of sanctity? They open one, and discover a balcony, or mural terrace, about twelve feet in length, exquisitely cool, sunless, and siesta-inviting, and with the whole panorama of town, river-mouth, and harbor outstretched beneath.

“Perhaps from this height we shall be able to

see Miss Burke about somewhere," cries Belinda; tardily conscience-stricken.

Remark the cruelty of fate, the pertinacity of that unspiritual god, Circumstance. In the streets, upon the ramparts, guarded at every step they took by an attendant mob of beggar children, they were safe, comparatively ; and in the church, by reason of its being a church, they were safe, comparatively. And then the christening drives them into the sacristy, and garlic and stale incense drive them out upon this balcony, where they are as much alone as they were on that first evening when "Lagrimas" sang her student song under the stars ; and then, and then—

"Belinda," says Roger Temple, somewhat irrelevantly, "don't speak of Miss Burke, child, until the subject is forced upon us. There is something you have omitted to explain to me, and this is a good moment to have it out. Mr. Jones has gone—my profound gratitude go with him—but why ? What sent Mr. Jones away ?"

"I'm sure I don't know ; that is of course, I know," answered Belinda lucidly. "Mr. Jones went—well, because he found there was no good in his remaining any longer."

"I see. You have behaved badly to him, Belinda, confess it ! Four days ago your dearest hope in life was to possess the Jones diamonds. Don't you remember what you said that first evening of our acquaintance, the evening when Senora Lagrimas promised to show me the Alhambra ? "

She turns away quickly, yet not so quickly but that Roger can mark the conscious reddening of her cheek. "I behaved badly to him, I know, and to myself too; badly from beginning to end. It makes me ashamed when I think of it. But now—oh, I have grown old and wise suddenly. It seems quite a year since you and Rose first came to St. Jean de Luz."

"I am sorry we have made your time hang so heavily."

No answer. Though they are only talking of Augustus Jones and his diamonds, talking as they might do if Rose or Miss Burke stood by, instinct tells Belinda what supreme moment hurries on apace. And her heart is beating so that she can hear its beats. If her life depended on it she could not lift her eyes to Roger's!

"However, you will be rid of us soon. Spencer is not amusing herself, it seems, and Rose says she does not dare stay more than two days longer. Don't quite forget us when—Belinda, oh, my darling!"

And with this all is over. The tears are raining down her cheeks, and Roger Temple has taken her hands in his and spoken words such as he never, no, not even in that unlawful whisper beside the hippopotamus, spoke to Rose.

"I have been so miserable," she stammers out her poor little confession presently, "miserable, hopeless, happy, all at once. Don't think badly,

don't think altogether badly of me, sir, and never, never, *never* tell Rose!"

"Think badly of you, Belinda, child! That is the cruellest stab. What, in God's name, do you suppose I think of myself?"

"And you will never tell Rose—I mean when you are far away, and all this is like a dream? You will never tell Rose, and you will not blame me more than you can help, when you think of me?"

"Blame you, my dearest!" And Roger draws her, shrinking, trembling, with a rapture that is half joy, half fear, to his breast.

The organ plays on and on within the church, and the priest's voice drones out the christening service, and down beneath, on the shore, the fisher children are calling to each other, and far off ebbs and falls the Atlantic. Belinda knows not whether these sounds last a minute or an hour. To human hearts in intense pleasure as in intense pain, the arbitrary divisions of time exist not. Roger loves her, Roger loves her, and she is with him—her hand clasped in his, his breath upon her cheek, his whispers—

"Montrez moi les robes de prêtre," cries a voice in rasping tourist French. "Quand j'ai vu je paie, pas avang."

And into the sacristy, note-book in hand, stalks Miss Burke, her sharp little point of a nose crimsoned by the sun, her boots thick with unsavory harbor mud. A dirty small boy in a dirtier surplice, one of the functionaries of the church, attends her.

Belinda and Captain Temple come in at once from the balcony. Belinda, to whom, as we know, the small change falsehoods of conventionality are not familiar, hangs her head and is silent. Roger has the extraordinary assurance to express his satisfaction at the meeting, and to add—Miss Burke watching his face; I blush for him as I write it—that they were “looking for her.”

“So I perceive,” says the lady curtly. “Looking for me among the idolatries of a Popish church! May I inquire whether you have also looked for a hotel and ordered dinner? I believe, I *believe*, Captain Temple, it was for that purpose that you left me alone in the boat.”

“Well, I—I—the fact is, I don’t know that we came across any hotel,” says Roger with an air of penitence. “But if you and Belinda will remain here I—”

“I have found a hotel, and I have ordered dinner,” says Miss Burke. “When a gentleman” with a northern emphasis on the word, “when a gentleman happens to belong to my party, I invariably take care to see to all practical matters myself. Luckily I am accustomed to independence.”

She turns tartly away, and with the help of her small cicerone proceeds to overhaul the “idolatries” of the place; the vestments, embroidered by loving, foolish, fingers in many a distant convent cell, our Lady of Delight, our Lady of Pain—all are viewed in the same cold, business spirit by the Woman of the

Future, and catalogued in the irrepressible note-book for literary use.

Belinda keeps studiously by her side, and away from Roger. The sound of Miss Burke's voice, the expression of Miss Burke's eye, have brought the poor child back roughly from Elysium to the world of fact. Five minutes ago she was in her lover's arms, happy to the verge of pain, uncalculating of the future, unconscious of either innocence or guilt. He is Captain Temple, Rosie's affianced husband now, and she is divided from him—oh, forever, and evermore. That caress was their first and last. The delight that, *beat out thin*, is made to extend over thirty or forty years of some women's lives, has lasted for her—as long as a kiss lasts, no more. And all the time the organ continues playing; and the sun shines in through the painted sacristy windows; and the children shout still by the river; and the little altar boy, with his picturesque face and dirty surplice, chatters volubly of saints, miracles, and madonnas. The external world as full of sunshine and glad sounds as it was ten minutes ago; and *her* world shipwrecked.

Alas, how easily things go wrong !
A sigh too much, or a kiss too long,
And there follow a mist, and a sweeping rain,
And life is never the same again.

They eat their dinner of strange herbs, garlic predominant, at the one modest posada the town possesses; drink their coffee, or what the innkeeper

writes in his bill as coffee, in the street, the whole population, lay and clerical, of Fontarabia looking on ; then the quick Southern night falls suddenly on plain and mountain, and they must prepare to return. Belinda's promised six hours of happiness are all but spent. All but—how many a fateful turning in one's life is encompassed by those two short words !

Miss Burke insists that she, and she alone, shall make the bargain for the carriage. "Captain Temple undertook to arrange for us about the boat," she remarks. "If we wish to get back to France to-night, the business part of the matter had better now be left to me. It requires moral courage to hold one's own with these shilly-shally, false tongued Spaniards, and gentlemen as a rule are not possessed of moral courage. I am."

As the sequel proves. After half an hour's hot contest, Miss Burke has succeeded in beating the cochero down to the very lowest fraction for which mortal souls may be conveyed across the frontier to St. Jean de Luz ; the fruits of her moral courage being the oldest, craziest carriage that Fontarabia can produce, with a horse gaunt and shadowy as ever came from Doré's pencil in his illustrations of Don Quixote.

And here again, mark one of those results of hidden causes which we are pleased to call fate. Had Miss Burke ordered any decent, Christian pattern of conveyance, with cattle to match, they had all remained decorously in each other's society throughout the journey ; no further whisper, or ghost of a whisper, between Roger and Belinda possible. But this

cranky vehicle is so heavy, the horse so weak, that long before they reach the frontier bridge at Irun, they are going at snail's pace; by the time they commence the ascent of Behobia they have come to a dead lock. The driver descends from his box; swears fearfully in Spanish, French, Basque; cracks his whip, applies his shoulder, or goes through the pantomime of applying it to the wheel. In vain. Not a step further can poor Rosinante stir. Their highnesses, these ladies and the gentleman, must make the ascent on foot if they would reach St. Jean to-night. No help for it. The horse was one of the best horses in Spain in his day, but what will you have? to every pig comes Martinmas—his day is past. If their highnesses had only consented to hire a pair!

Roger and Belinda jump out at once; Miss Burke refuses to move, again on principle. The man undertook to drive her from Fontarabia to St. Jean de Luz, and he shall hold to his bargain, if he take the whole night about it.

So "fate" has her way. On goes the cranky carriage; on go the swearing driver and the high-souled Burke; Belinda and Roger are left alone once more. Alone, but how far more cruelly divided, how infinitely nearer than when they loitered beside the altars of the dim old church at Fontarabia. Now has come the moment of temptation in earnest. They have but to turn their faces and the road to the Alhambra lies straight as road can lie before them. And in the heart of each is the memory of a kiss!



CHAPTER XIII.

“BOHEMIAN HONOR.”

“*T*AKE my arm, Belinda. The way is steep.” The way is steep, the loneliness profound. Upon one side stretches forth the Atlantic, silent at this hour, and motionless as any little mountain tarn; upon the other are the wild sierras and rocky defiles of the Pass. Behind them—the lights from a score of scattered villages gleaming through the dusk—lies Spain, the land of dreams, the land which even prosaic middle age cannot quit without a sigh.

“And we have not seen the Alhambra after all,” says Roger, some minutes later. She took his arm, as he bade her; her hand has become clasped, who knows how? in his, and she does not seek to draw it away. “Correctness,” the outwork of weakness, the prudery born of knowledge, is to Belinda’s Arab soul unknown. She is only honest as yet.

“No, we have not seen the Alhambra,” in rather a shaky voice comes her answer, “and we are not likely to see it—together, at all events.”

"Six short hours in Spain, and four of those spent with Miss Burke! Now, what can be the use of people like Miss Burke?" speculates Roger, philosophically. "I suppose one ought to accept them without questioning, like heat or electricity, or any other irreducible phenomena. They exist, and that is as much as will ever be known about them."

"I dare say I shall know enough about Burke before I have done with her," remarks Belinda.

"You—you are not going to live with Miss Burke any longer," says Roger hurriedly, and by no means calculating into what imprudence he will be betrayed next.

"I don't see what I should gain by leaving her, sir. We are accustomed, at least, to hating each other! I might be worse off among strangers."

"Belinda," stopping short and looking down into her face, "What is the use of talking or pretending to talk like this? As if either of us could forget! You to spend the best years of your youth with Miss Burke, and I—great heavens! the thing is a mockery! But it is not too late, my darling, it is not too late. We may draw back yet."

There are few men who make love really well, as regards eloquence of speech: ardent emotion and rounded periods seldom going hand in hand, save in the very highest regions of melodrama. But language, that in black and white reads trite enough, may easily be alchemized into poetry of a glorious summer night, in a mountain sierra, with the stars

shining overhead, and an uncritical heart of seventeen beating time to all you say.

"I don't want to draw back," says Belinda, mis-understanding him. "All this has come upon me—I scarce know how—come upon me whether I wished it or not. But if I could, I would not draw back now for I *shall have been happy*."

Roger folds her to him in quick embrace. "And we shall be separated no more, my child," he whispers. "Why, it would be monstrous for the happiness of our lives—of all our lives—to be sacrificed for mere want of courage to speak. We shall be separated no more."

He is, I repeat, one of the most chivalrously honorable men breathing. But chivalrously honorable people not unfrequently get themselves into perplexities more stinging than fall to the lot of good blunted-edged, unrefined common sense. Many a man, on his road to the altar with an affluent widow of forty, might be tempted into snatching a kiss from some pair of younger, sweeter lips by the way. Roger knows that he has snatched not a kiss only, but a heart, from this poor little girl whom his arm encircles; and revolted conscience hurries him into an atonement more perilous than the crime. To reject Belinda's love—to play the traitor with Rose—either alternative would be intolerable to him in cold blood. But his blood is by no means cold at the present moment; and he can hear the beating of Belinda's heart, and Rose, poor, foolish, elderly, artificial Rose, is an abstraction.

"Never separated," repeats Belinda half impatiently. "We shall be separated forever, sir, and you know it! Separated a thousand times more than if you were going to marry a stranger."

"Marry! Don't talk of my marrying. I can never marry any one but—"

The words are spoken under Roger Temple's breath, but they fall, with clearness such as human speech never possessed for her before, on Belinda's ear. She turns deadly white; even with this mask of night upon her face, Roger can see her change color. She breaks from his embrace.

"Tell me what you mean outright, Captain Temple. Say what you have to say plainly. You do not consider yourself bound, then, to marry Rose?"

And thus Roger is forced upon the very horns of the dilemma. Easy to suggest a possible dereliction from duty, by sigh or whisper; horribly hard to put into language with the honestest pair of child's eyes in the world looking straight into one's weak, troubled soul. "He had made an egregious error." Something to this effect does he at length contrive to answer her. "During the past dozen years or more had mistaken a sentiment for passion, and Rosie, poor Rosie, it may be, had mistaken too. But Rose must be appealed to—the happiness of all their lives left in her hands. She was the most absolutely generous of women."

"Who? Rose?" interrupts Belinda sharply.
"Well, generosity is the last quality I should have

assigned to my stepmamma! However, you should know best, Captain Temple, you should know best."

The tone in which the interruption is made, the cruel, mocking laugh accompanying it are Belinda to the life; Belinda as she used to be before the great transmuter changed all the baser metal of her nature to gold. But Roger's passionate mood is rather quickened than checked by the outburst. What man but must feel secretly flattered by the tender fierceness, the charming rancor, of one pretty woman toward another, especially when he knows himself to be the predisposing cause?

"My dearest little girl," he begins soothingly, and taking her hand again in his.

But Belinda breaks from him impetuously.

"Captain Temple, let us understand each other," she cries, lifting her eyes, with piercing earnestness, to his face. "After a dozen years' fidelity, you love Rose no longer, it seems,—are ready to throw her and your fidelity to the winds, and for my sake! Well, now, if this indeed is truth, not flattery, carry it into effect without delay. If we mean to commit a dishonest action, let us get it over at once, and without the treachery of soft words—appealing to poor Rosie's generosity, leaving the happiness of all our lives in poor Rosie's hands—bah! *I*, at least, am not made of such mawkish stuff!"

"Belinda, child. Great heaven! If you knew—"

"Over away there, sir, not a couple of miles off, is Spain. I know every turn, every short cut through the mountains. What hinders you and me from go-

ing to the Alhambra as we planned ? Miss Burke will say she left us, and Rosie, poor Rosie, must guess the rest. Are you ready ? ”

“ Ready ? ” repeats Roger Temple gravely. Wonderfully has his blood cooled, amazingly has reason reasserted herself, under the shock of the girl’s audacity. “ You are asking me, you know not what, Belinda ; but the fault is mine, wholly mine. We will, as you say, stoop to no treachery of soft words. I will speak openly to Rose to-night, and—”

“ And whatever Rose answers, whatever you may work upon Rose to answer, mind, *I* have done with you ! ” cries Belinda, in a voice of concentrated passion. “ You think you know me because you have amused yourself by flirting with me for half a dozen days, sir ; because you have played a few scenes of moonshine love on a balcony, and won me to say what I said to you this afternoon. But you know me no more than the first stranger who meets me in the street. What ! You think I would sink so low as to marry you—Rosie’s lover ? ”

“ You stooped so low, I thought as to like me a little,” is Roger’s reply. “ But you are ashamed already, small wonder, God knows, of your folly ! ”

For a second or two Belinda is dumb. “ If I lived fifty more years,” she breaks forth then, “ if I lived to be an old, old woman, I should never be ashamed of what you call ‘ my folly.’ Never. If—if such a feeling were shameful, how could it have come into my heart ? I never tried, I never wanted to like you.

I knew nothing at all about it till I woke up to-day, and then it was too late to go back. Was it not?"

"Too late indeed," repeats Roger, horribly contrite—contrite as a man might feel who, through blundering accident, had injured a little child for life.

"Well, I can't help what I feel any more than I can help breathing, but my actions—those are my own. And to think that I would take you by stealth, dishonestly take you from Rose, I, who wouldn't do a sneaking thing to save my life!"

"Belinda, I—"

"I don't pretend to be good or virtuous, you see, for I've been so kicked about here and there, and have seen so much and heard so much, that I don't rightly know what virtue is. But whatever game I play, I play it fair. Ask the fellows in St. Jean de Luz if they have ever known me score a false point or take a dirty advantage of any one. You have promised to marry Rose, and you must marry her, by heaven! Whether you love her or not, you should love your own honor too well to think of change now."

And here, if the reader asks me how comes this quality of inalienable uprightness to exist in Belinda O'Shea's heart, a poor neglected little Arab, ignorant of the very A B C of so many ornamental virtues, I answer, I know no more than how the wall-flower gets its color and perfume from the rock. It may be that some qualities of the human soul flourish better exposed to all life's generous chances than

under lock and key—that moral growths, like physical ones, have a tendency to elude the barriers of system. The finest wine of Medoc, remember, is raised from a soil where weeds refuse to thrive.

“ You read me a sharp lesson,” says Roger Temple. “ You make me see my own conduct in a fearfully clear light, Belinda.”

“ Yours! You have not been to blame at all,” cries the girl, womanlike in this, that she *should sooner* guilt rested with her than blame with the man she loves. “ You meant only to be kind to me at first for Rosie’s sake. How could you guess I was going to make such a miserable fool of myself?”

Her voice quivers, breaks down ; she covers her face between her hands, and once more Roger’s arm, unresisted, holds her close. The embrace lasts for a minute’s space or more, and Roger is the first to speak.

“ Before we go on our way again, before we go back to our path and duty, I want you to say just one word, child—that you forgive me.”

“ I have nothing to forgive. If I could choose, I would live the time over again since I have known you—yes, up to this very minute.”

“ And are we going to be friends or enemies in the days to come ? ”

“ I don’t know about ‘friends.’ I shall care for you till the day I die, as I do now.”

“ And I may have one more kiss—a last one ? ”

She throws her arms round his neck without a word.

But Roger does not misunderstand her this time. In the intensity, the abandonment of that caress he reads aright, that Belinda is taking leave of him forever.





CHAPTER XIV.

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

AND now the closing act remains to be played. Scene, Rosie's drawing-room at the Isabella ; a lamp or two artistically disposed round the central figure of the tableau ; Venetian shutters, half closed ; a voluptuous fragrance from the magnolias and orange flowers in the court-yard below. Central figure, Rosie, dressed in the palest lavender silk that ever milliner called mourning, with white Spanish veil, with jet comb and earrings, with the bloom of undying youth (warranted) on her cheek—Rosie, light of spirit, satisfied with herself and with the world, that forms her background, as ever.

To her, just as nine o'clock strikes, enters Belinda, tired-looking, dust-stained, her cheeks paler than her dress, her eyes showing all too plainly the marks of recent tears.

“Why, Belinda, I thought you were never coming back, any of you! And what an object! I am

more thankful than ever I did not go. These sorts of days are mistakes."

"Utter mistakes," repeats Belinda, sinking into the first chair she comes across. "You have had by far the best of it at home, Rosie."

"It certainly is nice to say one has been in Spain, but one can say it just as well without going, and as to churches and things, they are all alike, and you never know what horrid disease you may catch. How do you like me in a veil? Spencer insists that she has pinned it right, but I am not sure that it should be fastened so high. Now, just see—oh, you must stand up to get the full effect—do you think *one* inch lower would be more becoming? Look at me attentively, full face and profile."

Rosie turns herself slowly round, as the wax ladies with big eyelashes turn in the barbers' shops, and Belinda watches her with a pang of wearied envy: envy, not of her charms, but of this all-engrossing vanity which so fills and satisfies the creature's own foolish life.

"Spencer is right, Rose. It is pinned to perfection. An inch, half an inch, either way, might spoil the effect."

"I thought I looked rather well," says Rose, coquettishly surveying herself in an opposite mirror. "But, of course, in trying a new style one is apt to be nervous. And then I have a horror of anything theatrical. Nothing, I know, would occasion Colonel Drewe such a shock as to find me looking theatrical. He had always the most fastidious taste."

"Colonel Drewe?" repeats Belinda, a little absently. "Ah, to be sure, I had forgotten. You and Colonel Drewe have not seen each other yet, then?"

"No; poor dear fellow—Stanley does not yet know the worst! He wanted to call on me, not ten minutes after you had started, but Spencer made so much of my headache—she is really *a fool*, Belinda, when you put her to the test—Spencer made so much of my headache, and my sufferings, that, at last, he took her at her word, and went to Biarritz for the afternoon, saying he would call again at nine, for certain. Spencer declares the passionate expression of his eyes when he said those words 'for certain,' was enough to make your blood run cold."

"Then I am not wanted, Rose," says Belinda, rising. "If Colonel Drewe is to be here with passionate eyes at nine, the sooner I take myself off the better."

But the widow will, for no consideration, be left alone; is coy as a girl of seventeen at the thought of receiving Colonel Drewe, any gentleman, at nine o'clock in the evening, unchaperoned. At least, Belinda must stop until the first shock of the meeting, the first agonized shake of the hands is over; and then—then it suddenly occurs to Mrs. Rose to inquire for her own lawfully affianced lover, whose existence, in the delightful excitement of Colonel Drewe's arrival, she has, to tell the truth, as near as possible forgotten.

"Captain Temple will be here in a few minutes," says Belinda. Well must she school herself before

her tongue can falter out his name! "Miss Burke hired the most horrible old rattle-trap to bring us back from Fontarabia, and Captain Temple and I had to walk a good part of the way. And it was dusty—and I believe Captain Temple has gone to his lodgings to change his coat."

The girl dissimulates vilely; stammers, changes color at every word. But Rosie's universe at the present moment is comprised in one fondly-imagined vision, Colonel Drewe, and she sees, hears nothing.

"Dear, good, old Roger! I can assure you, Belinda, this has been the most harrowing day of my whole life—first thinking of one of them, then the other! If I had to decide selfishly," says Rose, "if Roger Temple's very life did not hang upon my fidelity, as it does, I am not sure, considering age and standing and everything else, I should not incline most toward Stanley. Mind, I only say, I am not sure. The Temples are a most excellent family. I shall get Lady Olivia Temple to present me at court next spring, and if there *is* a thing I adore in the world, it is birth."

"Except in the case of Mr. Augustus Jones," suggests Belinda.

"Ah, poor Mr. Jones!" says Rose in an altered voice. "That was quite a different thing. Money in these days is a kind of aristocracy. I am afraid, Belinda, you have behaved very foolishly about Augustus," she runs on. "I did everything in my power to forward your interests, and now, it seems, he has left the place out of temper with us all. If

you throw away excellent chances in this way, what prospect can there be of your settling?"

"What prospect, indeed? Most likely I am fated to be an old maid, Rosie. No use fighting against fate, you know."

"If Roger's disposition were different, I should be willing to offer you a home with us at once. For your poor father's sake, Belinda, in memory of the tender, perfect attachment that existed between us, I shall always look upon you with a mother's eyes, and after a time I shall hope to bring Roger into my wishes. But at present he is so sensitive, morbidly sensitive I call it, as regards my undivided attention! I am certain he would be jealous, even of your constant presence."

"Very likely—it would be rash, at all events, to try the experiment! And no change of life would make me happier than I am. Miss Burke talks of travelling in Germany before she begins a fresh book. I may as well travel in Germany with her. By the time I have learned another language or two I could earn a decent livelihood, could I not, as a teacher in a school?"

"Well, there can never be any harm in a young woman acquiring the means of independence," says Rose. "Although, with your means, Belinda, you will at all times have enough to support you nicely. Perhaps," complacently, "teaching *may* be your vocation, my dear. It is not every woman," with a sigh, "who is destined for marriage; and, really,

those who are not have much to be thankful for. Marriage, as I know to my cost, is a state—”

But the summing up of Rosie's wedded experiences remains forever incomplete. Just as she is speaking comes a discreet ladies' maid's tap at the outer door of the apartment, and in another moment appears Spencer; in a faded grey silk dress, with mock jet cross and earrings, with the downcast ogle of mock modesty, a cheap imitation of her mistress to the last.

“The gentleman who called this morning, ma'am, would be glad to know if you are sufficiently well to receive him ?”

Spencer's face telegraphs the intelligence that the visitor, in point of fact, is at her heels; and Rose, sinking a little further away from the lamplight, adjusts her handkerchief and eyelashes to perfection point.

“I will make an effort to see this gentleman, Spencer”—how Colonel Drewe's heart must thrill at that veiled cooing voice! “I am far, very far, from strong yet, still, if it be a matter of business—”

Another two seconds, and the visitor is midway across the room.

He is tall, just Colonel Drewe's height, and has the unmistakable military air dear to Rosie's heart. So much, without uplifting her eyes, the widow can discern. But what—what ails Belinda! The girl has grown white as ashes; she starts, trembling, to her feet; a cry of doubt, fear, hope, all blended, comes from her lips.

"Belinda, my dear, let me introduce—" begins Rose, rising with languid grace from the sofa. "I don't think you and Colonel—Colonel—"

The poor soul turns green under all her pearl powder, under all her fadeless, warranted "Bloom of Youth." Well she may! In one of his charming little poems, Owen Meredith tells us how, in the lives of most men and women,

There's a moment when things might yet go even,
If only the dead could find out when
To come back and be forgiven.

But resurrections that in poetry are desirable enough, may prove horribly awkward in everyday prose, especially when comfortable fortunes have been inherited, new engagements entered upon in the interval. Rose turns green, feels her limbs give way beneath her; shrieks; a good natural shriek, for once, just as she would give at the apparition of a frog or spider. Then, the genius of folly inspiring her, moves a step or two forward, and sinks into the stranger's arms.

"I knew it all along!" she gasps out. "My heart told me you were never really, really dead!"

Could the best actress, the cleverest woman breathing, have hit upon a falsity so utter, so conciliatory, so impossible of contradiction? I repeat that folly, transcendent as Rosie's folly, scales heights that genius itself can scarce attain.

O'Shea—for it is indeed Cornelius—holds his wife in a sort of rapture, to his waistcoat. (It is not

a new waistcoat, Rosie sorrowfully perceives. Many cheap cigars have been smoked, much brandy and absinthe consumed since either waistcoat or coat was new. Cornelius, in very truth, has been "muddled in fortune's moat, and smells somewhat strong of her displeasure.") He bends his head down over hers.

"There are feelings too sacred for utterance," he exclaims. Curious when people feel nothing at all, how invariably they insist upon analyzing their feelings. "The years, the cruel years of our separation fade away, and it seems but yesterday I held my only darling to my heart."

"But I am changed?" murmurs Rose, the identical remark she murmured on that first night of Roger's return from India. "I am an old, old woman now?"

She lifts her face; traces of rice powder rest on Major O'Shea's waistcoat, as they rested erewhile on Roger's, and then, looking into each other's eyes, and holding each other's hands, husband and wife, in broken, oft-interrupted accents, make mutual confession.

Cornelius throws infinite pathos into his. The newspaper announcement of his death, he declares, was, in the first instance, a hoax, one of those cruel practical jokes to which the most innocent men may fall victims. Afterwards—fretting, as was his habit, about his poor, devoted wife, away in England—the idea crossed his brain of working out the mistake to her benefit. "My life, up to that time," and tears are in the good old fellow's eyes as he speaks, "my

life, up to that time, had brought little else but harm to those I loved, I resolved to see if the supposition of my death might not prove to their advantage. My Rosie's mental sufferings?" Rose, at this point having managed to falter out something decorous about the suddenness of the blow and her own anguish of bereavement. "Ah, my love, the years of tranquil domestic happiness before us now must atone for *that*. The end, my Rosie—'tis false morality—but let us hope that in this case at least, the end will justify the means."

"I'm sure I hope it will make no difference about Uncle Robert's will." This is Rosie's first really earnest and coherent utterance. Whatever her intellectual shortcomings generally, there is method in Rosie's folly on most points connected with money. "I know my uncle would never have left me a shilling if he had thought—"

"That that worthless scoundrel and spendthrift, Cornelius O'Shea, still haunted the earth," interrupts Cornelius, with admirable frankness. "Set your mind at rest, my dear girl. I consulted my lawyers about all the troublesome business technicalities of the matter, immediately upon my return to England. The money is as legally and truly yours as you are legally and truly mine, and only mine, Rose."

So much for Major O'Shea. Rosie gets through the difficult part she has to play not without credit. After looking forward to being the wife of a man, young, handsome, distinguished, as Roger Temple-nay, after hesitating, one short quarter of an hour

ago, as to whether Roger Temple or that elegant creature, Stanley Drewe, should be the object of one's choice, now suddenly to find one's self folded in a husband's legitimate embrace! A husband with his nose redder, his head balder, his whole person, alas, a vast deal older, slovenlier, uglier than when one parted from him. Would not the situation be tragic to many a wiser and better woman than poor Rose?

She sighs more sincerely than she ever sighed in her life before; she weeps some furtive scalding tears on O'Shea's well worn waistcoat. She is sorry exceedingly; sorry in the very depths of her soul over his resurrection. But although a husband, Cornelius is still a man, and it is not in Rosie's nature to act otherwise than with angelic outward sweetness toward any member of the other sex.

"You seem to forget that we are not the only people in the world," she whispers to him, after a time. "You quite forget the cause that brought me to St. Jean de Luz—Belinda."

And now Belinda, who has with difficulty restrained herself during the scene of tender connubial reunion, rushes forward and flings herself upon her father's breast.

She never sees that his coat lacks fashion, and his waistcoat freshness. Cheap cigars, brandy, absinthe, none of these things are perceived by Belinda. "Papa? My own darling papa!"

As she clings to him, as she feels his lips upon her head, the blind adoring love of old childish days

thrills through her heart. She kisses his face, his hands, the sleeve of his threadbare coat. She sends up a passionate, mute thanksgiving to heaven in her great joy.

"And so Belinda has grown up a beauty, after all," says O'Shea, holding his graceful brown girl at arm's length that he may the better admire her. "But I have seen you already to-day, Belinda. - I watched you this morning—little you all suspected it—when you were starting from the hotel. A good-looking young fellow that, who was with her, Rose, eh? It would be indiscreet, I dare say, to ask his name."

"His name is Temple, Roger Temple," answers Belinda, her face burning with blushes, more for Rose's sake than her own.

"An old friend of mine—and Mr. Shelma-deane's," adds Rose. Poor Rose! She must be really more than mortal could she make this renunciatory speech in a cheerful tone. "I had run down here with my maid to see our dear Belinda, and—and we met Captain Temple—accidentally—"

"As you have now met me, Rosie," says Cornelius, coming, with admirable tact, to her rescue. "Quite a chapter of accidents, is it not? But never mind, my love! All's well that ends well, and I shall be only too delighted to make Mr. Roger Temple's acquaintance. This moment," adds O'Shea, looking much as gentlemen look when they get on their legs to return thanks after dinner, "this moment is the happiest—the crown, the finish, so to

speak—of my whole chequered life. But let me set myself right in the opinion of those who are dearest to me. I come back, after long absence, after years of reputed death; I find my Rosie fairer, younger than when I left her, and with her affections still mine, and I am the happiest fellow this side the equator. But," exclaims Cornelius grandly, "had a cruel fate ordained otherwise, had I found my beloved wife in a position where duty demanded such a sacrifice, I would, whatever the cost, have kept the fact of my existence a secret, and in a distant land have prayed to my last hour for the happiness of her from whom honor, the strongest feeling of which man's breast is capable, held me apart."

Major O'Shea seems to have grown an inch taller during the course of this peroration. He pronounces the word honor with the marked emphasis you will frequently observe men of somewhat shifty character attach to it. His daughter gazes at him with fond, wet eyes and trembling lips; while his wife—well, I don't want to be hard on Rosie any more, so we will say that his wife, too, weeps. She holds her laced pocket handkerchief, at all events, across her face, and keeps up a little running fire of sighs and shudders and plaintive shakes of the head which may be interpreted at will.

Just as the family group has arrived at this interesting position, in walks Roger Temple. He is not absolutely ignorant of how matters stand (do you suppose Spencer, with the key-hole sagacity of her tribe, did not know that the visitor was no visitor, but a

master, to the full as soon as Rosie knew it herself?) and it must be confessed bears the calamity that has befallen him with a show of manly fortitude that does him credit.

"This—this is Captain Temple," stammers poor Rosie, "Cornelius, my dear—"

"Captain Temple, let me introduce myself," says O'Shea, airily, and moving toward his wife's friend with outstretched, cordial hand. "A dead man may dispense with formalities. Very happy and proud to make Captain Temple's acquaintance!"

Who could feel awkwardness long, under the Hibernian sunshine of such a greeting? If we were to conclude that no queer, contradictory pang of jealousy contracts Roger's heart at this moment we should err. I have said already that the existence of a husband, any husband, seems a necessary element of that Quixotic sentiment of his which he has been so long accustomed to consider hopeless passion; and the sight of Rose at O'Shea's side has awakened emotion in him such as he certainly never felt during the past heavy weeks when he knew, or believed, her to be legitimately his own.

This jealousy, however, jealousy, regret, call it by what name one will, is evanescent as the love itself was unreal. At the first glance Roger meets from Belinda's eyes, Major O'Shea's resurrection seems to him as much a thing of the past as the parting on the Margate beach, or the declaration beside the hippopotamus! Five minutes later the restored husband and supplanted lover are chatting together with a

friendliness that must dispel Rosie's last lingering dread as to the probability of a duel. In half an hour's time O'Shea is whispering affectionately in his wife's ear—Darby and Joan together—on the sofa (I have been harsh, too harsh, upon Rosie, more than once; it gives me pleasure to part from her in peace, happily restored to a husband's sheltering arms); and Belinda finds herself at an open window, in the farthest corner of the room, with Roger Temple by her side.

They talk common-places for a long time, talk about the clearness of the night, the beauty of the stars, the sweetness of the orange flowers in the courtyard. They keep at a distance; they dare not look into each other's eyes. And all the while they know that they are lovers; that the good-bye spoken between them a couple of hours ago is canceled; that they are free; and God willing, mean to pass through the rest of their lives together, hand in hand.

"Time for me to be thinking of the Maison Lohobiague and Miss Burke," says Belinda at last. "There is Costa waiting patiently at the gate, as usual, to take me home."

"Home! Don't let me hear you use the word any more in connection with the Maison Lohobiague," exclaims Roger. "You have finished with the Maison Lohobiague and Miss Burke forever."

"Yes; I suppose papa will like me to live in England, now. Poor papa—if you knew how good it is to be able to say that word again!"

"I hope another word may seem as good to you some day?"

No reply in speech. She only turns to him her dark eyes, shining through a mist of joyful tears, and Roger Temple is contented.

"It cannot be for a long, immensely long time to come." This remark of Belinda's is in answer to a very difficult and momentous question that Roger asks her presently. "In the first place because of Rose—Rose, who believes your heart to be breaking, sir, at this moment! In the second, because I shall have to go to school. Do you know, Captain Temple, that I cannot write my own name legibly?"

"I dare say you will be able to sign it, to make a cross at least, on one important occasion," says Roger gravely. "That is quite sufficient. I don't get on with learned ladies or they with me; witness Miss Burke."

"But I am ignorant of everything—"

"Except bull-fighting, bolero-dancing, slang in four languages—"

"Ah, don't remind me of all that now," she interrupts him with burning cheeks. "If you knew," humbly, "how different I mean to be for the future! Send me to the strictest boarding-school in Brighton, London, anywhere you choose—only get a home for Costa, meanwhile—and see if I can't be turned into a respectable member of society in time."

Roger takes her trembling hand in his and kisses it.

"You shall never go to a boarding-school while you live, child, in London or elsewhere, and heaven forbid you should be turned into anything but what you are! There are respectable members of society, and to spare, in the world already. There are very few Belindas."

So the curtain falls upon this little drama.

Let us hope that the "moonshine love on a balcony" will prove love of the true sort after all—the sort that lasts for life.

THE END.





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